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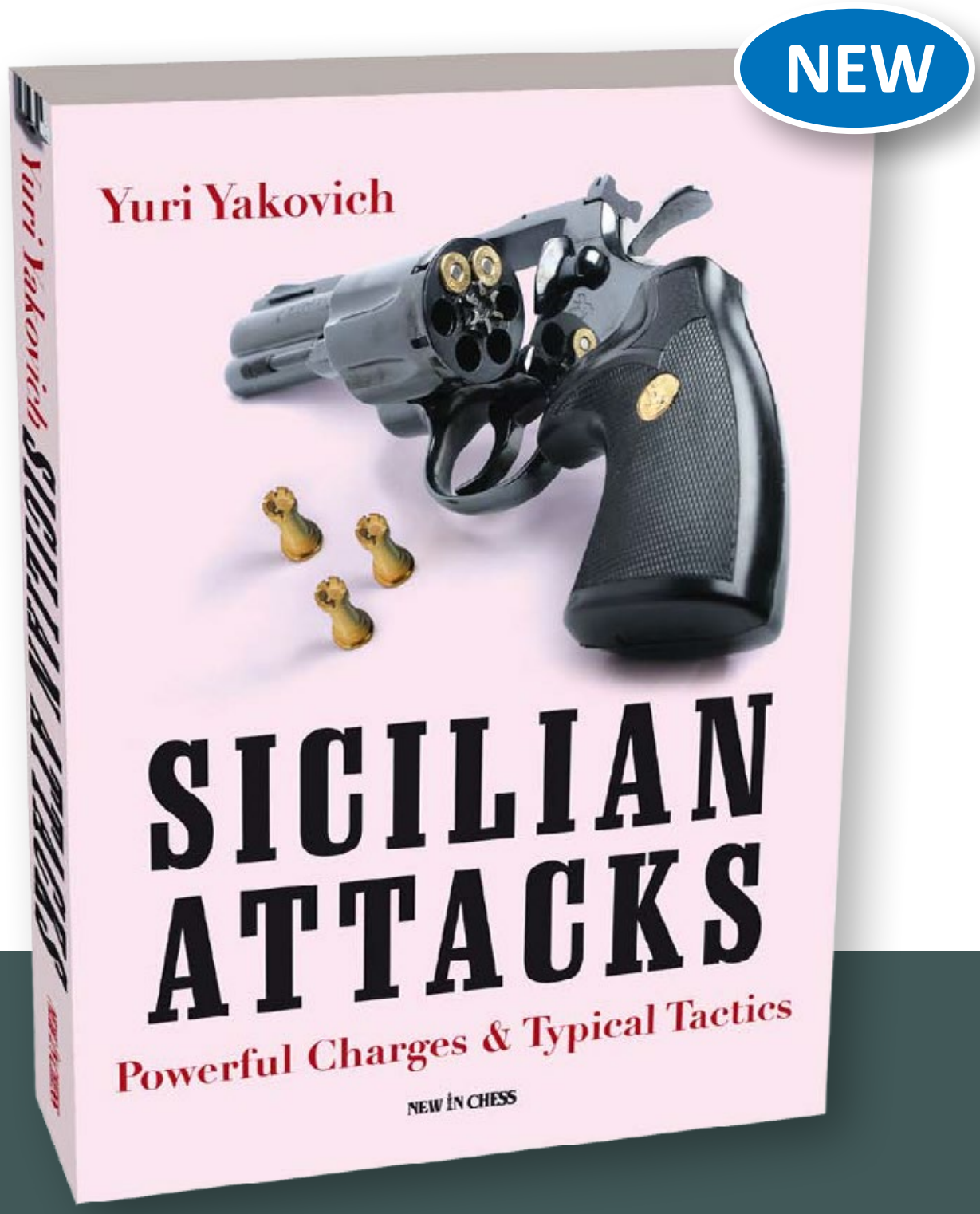

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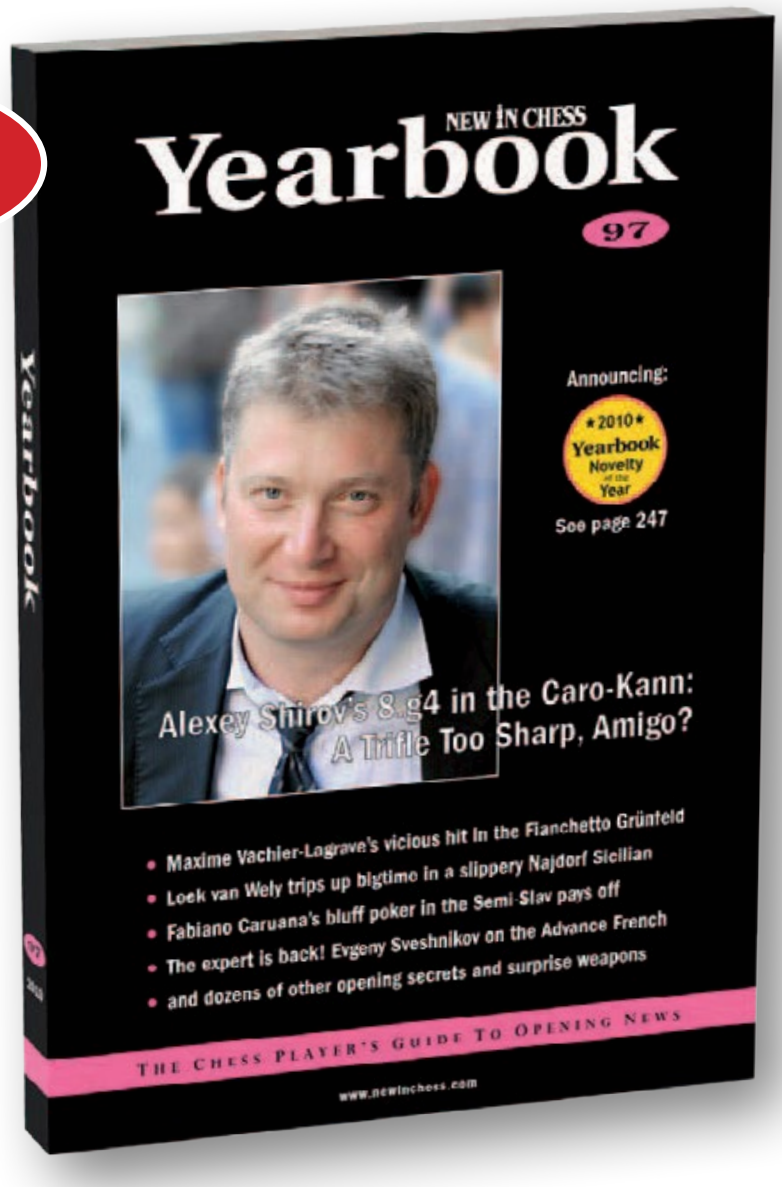
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A Trifle Too Sharp, Amigo?
• Maxime Vachier-Lagrave's vicious hit in the Fianchetto Grünfeld
• Loek van Wely trips up bigtime in a slippery Najdorf Sicilian
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The Chess Player’s Guide to Opening News

2010 Issue 8

NEW IN CHESS

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Within a handful of years the Tal Memorial in the heart of Moscow has grown into one of the most prestigious chess summits in the world. The fifth edition, again held with a spectacular view of Red Square, saw riveting chess and set new standards for video coverage both at the venue and online. At the end of a long and crazy last round three players finished with the same number of points. Two of them, Levon Aronian and Sergey Karjakin were declared the winners. That was a pity. The Tal Memorial, a symbol of Russia's resurrection as chess superpower, deserves one undisputed winner. Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam reports from the Russian capital.

27 Levon 'Slowhand' Aronian Blitz World Champion
The traditional dessert of the Tal Memorial was the World Blitz Championship. A Grand Dessert, to everyone's taste with most of the fastest players present. Carlsen, Grischuk and Nakamura were the hot favourites, but Levon Aronian decided the race in his favour well before the end. The Armenian could even lose his last two games.

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'But no matter how popular Petrosian was abroad, nothing could compare with the attention he got at home. When he came to Yerevan it was a national event.' Genna Sosonko portrays the 9th World Champion.

38 Kramnik Wins Bilbao Grand Slam Final
Having won a blitz tie-break against Levon Aronian in Shanghai, Vladimir Kramnik entered the second stage of the 2010 Masters Final through the back door. One month later, in Bilbao, the Russian grandmaster emerged as the glorious winner. 'Even before coming here I told my wife that I felt I was in good shape.'

54 Sculptor Meets Chess Player
Dirk Poldauf had the privilege of watching German sculptor Bertrand Freiesleben make a bust of Vladimir Kramnik at the former World Champion's home in Paris. A fine opportunity for a discussion about chess and art.

Magnus Carlsen Bounces Back in Nanjing 60

His form at the Olympiad had been shaky and his result in Bilbao sparked talk about 'a crisis'. What crisis? In Nanjing Magnus Carlsen silenced all critics and doubting Thomases. His final score was slightly less astounding than his stellar performance last year, but easily enough to finish one point ahead of World Champion Vishy Anand. At the other end of the globe Carlsen's campaign was closely followed by his friend and compatriot Jon Ludvig Hammer.

Are You Dynamic? 78

'Well, are you?', Jonathan Rowson wonders in his review of the new edition of Mihai Suba's classic *Dynamic Chess Strategy*.

Two White Draws Can't Stop Vachier-Lagrave 82

He wouldn't have known he was invited if he hadn't checked his spambox. And he couldn't have played in Hoogeveen if the Univé tournament had not been moved by a day. But once these obstacles were overcome Maxime Vachier-Lagrave was unstoppable

Revenge on the Cap 92

The place was the same, the date was the same (well, almost) and the finalists were the same, but this time the outcome was the opposite from the 2008 version of the Trophée CCAS in Cap d'Agde.

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Hans Ree read *Chess Duels*, an autobiographical games collection of his friend Yasser Seirawan.

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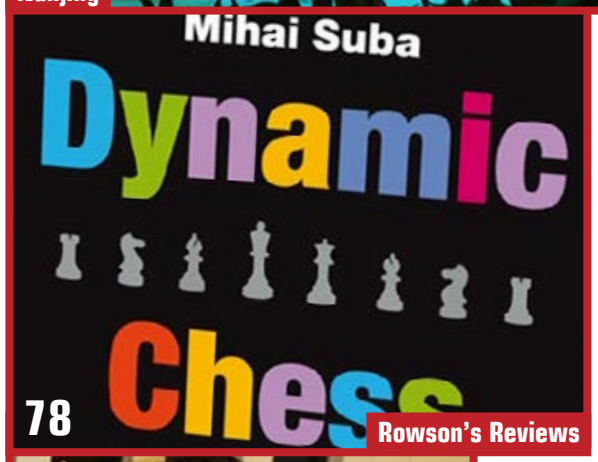

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COVER PHOTO

Vladimir Kramnik: New In Chess

Better Late than Never

The year 2010 is hastening to its end, so the opening day of the World Blitz Championship in Moscow was an apt moment to award the 2009 Chess Oscar. The winner of the vote, organized by Russian chess magazine '64', was a delighted Magnus Carlsen, who was presented with a small bronze statuette by chief editor Mark Glukhovsky. It was the first time the Norwegian grandmaster won the Oscar, and if the signs don't deceive it will not have been the last time. With victories in Wijk aan Zee, Nice, Bazna and Nanjing under his belt Carlsen also looks a likely winner of the 2010 Oscar, unless he is outshone at the London Chess Classic by World Champion Vishy Anand, who won the Oscar in 2007 and 2008.

Less than Satisfactory

Magnus Carlsen will ambitiously chase new victories in 2011, there's no doubt about that, but there's one highlight on next year's calendar that he will skip. In a letter to FIDE the number 2 in the current world rankings has announced his withdrawal from the Candidates' matches. Two brief excerpts from his letter will give you an idea of his disenchantment with the way FIDE has been running what should be the most important competition for every top player: 'After careful consideration I've reached the conclusion that the ongoing 2008-2012 cycle does not represent a system sufficiently modern and fair to provide the motivation I need to go through a lengthy process of preparations and matches and to perform at my best.' And: 'Reigning champion privileges, the long (five year) span of the cycle, changes made during the cycle resulting in a new format (Candidates) that no World Champion has had to go through since Kasparov, puzzling ranking criteria as well as the shallow ceaseless match-after-match concept are all less than satisfactory in my opinion.'

The announcement was a shock, but in hindsight one cannot say that Carlsen's decision came out of the blue. More than once he has criticized FIDE for lack of professionalism and clarity, without

Magnus Carlsen with his first Oscar.

getting the feeling that they were taking his complaints seriously. Carlsen's colleagues regretted his step, often showing incomprehension and pointing out that finally some system had been restored in the world championship. Trying to limit the dramatic impact of Carlsen's move they also stressed that given his lack of match experience he was certainly not the odds-on favourite. Inevitably, they also speculated about his motives, often hinting at Garry Kasparov's possible role in the background. After the FIDE elections in Khanty-Mansiysk that was a tempting conclusion to draw, but when we spoke to Kasparov he stressed that there was no truth in this at all. On the contrary, he also regretted Carlsen's withdrawal, as the Candidates' matches had been the big goal in the year that they had worked together.

In the meantime FIDE has announced the dates and venue of the Candidates' matches. They will be held in Kazan, Russia, from May 3 to 27, 2011. Remarkably, in their press release FIDE does not mention Carlsen's withdrawal and lists him as one of the Candidates who should confirm their participation by December 22. First reserve, in case someone drops out, is Alexander Grischuk, the only player who said he liked Carlsen's decision. But will he get a chance to play? Teimour Radjabov, Carlsen's opponent in the original pairings, feels that after a prolonged period of preparation there should be no new pairings. If Carlsen drops out, Radjabov is of the opinion that the first match should be declared lost for the Norwegian.

A Queen's King's Gambit

Although she is less active these days, she's still the number one woman player in the world and she still sees herself as a professional chess player. You can be sure that if Judit Polgar sits down at the board, she's come to win – as her competitors found out in Mexico City, where as part of a chess festival celebrating the centenary of UNAM University Polgar was inexorable in rapid chess. First she defeated Vasily Ivanchuk 2½-1½ and then she smashed Veselin Topalov in the final, 3½-½. In the fourth game, when the mini-match was already decided, the First Lady of Chess dealt the coup de grace in a King's Gambit.

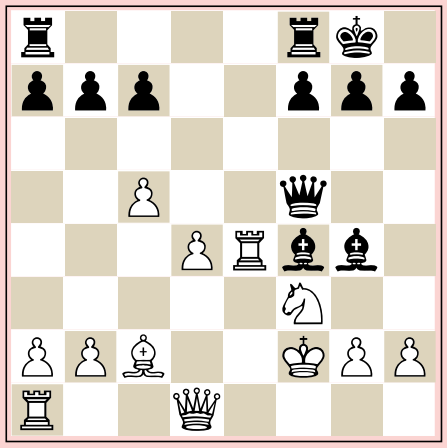
Judit Polgar – Veselin Topalov

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♗c4 d5 4.exd5 ♕h4+ 5.♔f1 ♗d6 6.♘f3 ♕h5 7.♘c3 ♘e7 8.d4 0-0 9.♔f2 ♘d7

10.♖e1 ♘b6 11.♗b3 ♘exd5 12.♘xd5 ♘xd5 13.c4 ♘e3 14.♗xe3 fxe3+ 15.♖xe3 ♗f5 16.c5 ♗f4

Of course Judit Polgar came to win.

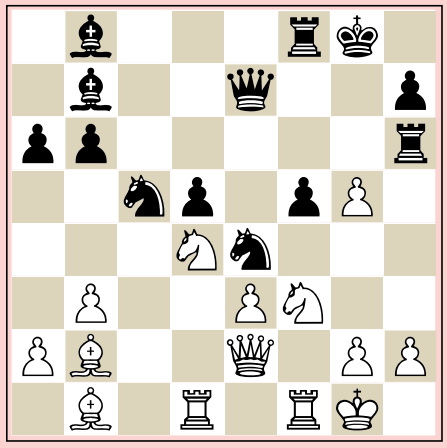
17.♖e7 ♗g4 18.♖e4 ♕f5 19.♗c2 The position is about equal, but Black should be careful with his queen running the risk of walking into a minefield. A good move now is 19...♖ad8.



19...♗h5? With the queen in the firing line of the white bishop, this costs a piece. **20.♖e5 ♗xf3** Also losing is 20...♕g4 21.♗f5 ♕h4+ 22.g3 ♗xf3 23.♔xf3 ♗xg3 24.hxg3 ♕f6 25.♔g2. **21.♔xf3 ♕f6 22.♖f5 ♕h6 23.♖xf4 ♖ae8 24.♕d3 f5 25.h4 ♖e4 26.♕d2 ♖e7 27.♖e1** Black resigned.

Snow Drops Turn into Hail Stones

The traditional Snowdrops vs. Old Hands organized by the Prague Chess Association continues to evoke golden memories. That is, if we don't watch the result. In Marianske Lazne, a place rich in chess history (remember Nimzowitsch's great victory in Marienbad 1925? That was here!) the young ladies were clearly too strong for the heroes of yesteryear. Humpy Koneru, Viktoria Cmilyte, Arianne Caoili and Tereza Olsarova defeated Lajos Portisch, Vlastimil Hort, Dragoljub Velimirovic and Wolfgang Uhlmann 18-14. Which may be called a surprise, as the ladies had several handicaps to overcome. Based on their average ratings they were expected to suffer a heavy defeat, Koneru and Cmilyte could not play their regular repertoire because of the upcoming Women's World Championship, and the weakest link on their team, Tereza Olsarova, was only rated 2185, which should be good for about 1½ points. But led by Humpy Koneru (6/8) the ladies called the shots, and Tereza Olsarova not only scored 3½ points but also won the beauty prize for her flashy win against Lajos Portisch!



Lajos Portisch – Tereza Olsarova
position after 25.fxg5

25...♕xg5! 26.b4??
Now White gets into deep trouble. He should have played 26.g3 ♕g6 27.♕g2 ♕g4 28.♘h4 ♖hf6 29.♕e2 ♗e5, with an unclear position.
26...♕h5 27.h3 ♘g3 28.♕c2 ♘xf1 29.♔xf1 ♘e4 30.♕b3 ♖g6 31.♘e2 ♘g3+ 32.♘xg3 ♖xg3 33.♖xd5?
After 33.♕c3 the situation on the board is definitely better for Black, but winning this kind of position would not be easy.
33...♖xf3+?
The correct move was 33...♕f7, and Black should be winning.
34.♔g1! ♕f7 34...♗h2+ only leads to a draw: 35.♔h1 (35.♔xh2?

Tereza Olsarova (2185) showed no mercy for Lajos Portisch (2544).

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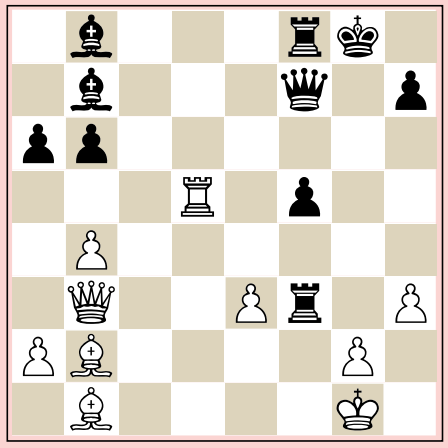
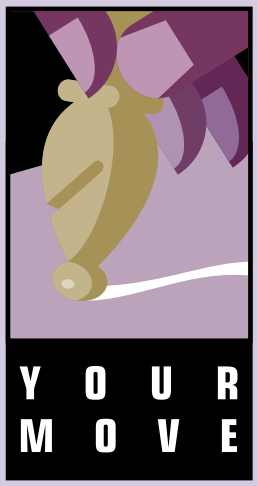
is a blunder: 35...♖xh3+ 36.gxh3 ♕e2+ 37.♔g3 ♕e1+ 38.♔f4, and White is lost) 35...♕f7 36.♖d7 ♕xb3 37.axb3.

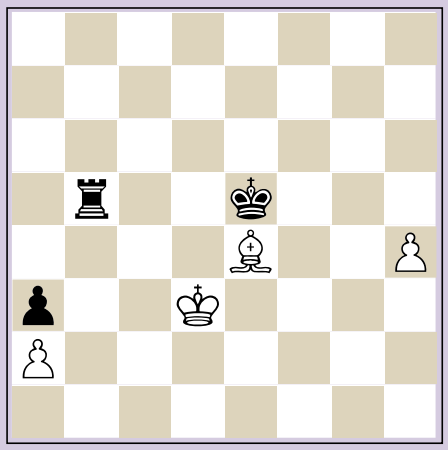


35.♕c3??
This loses quickly. White could have made a draw with 35.♖d7! ♖g3 36.♖xf7 ♖xg2+ 37.♔f1 ♖xf7 38.♕c3 ♔f8 39.♗e4 ♗xe4 40.♕c8+ ♔e7 41.♕xb8.
35...♕g6 36.♖d7
Or 36.♕h8+ ♔f7 37.♖d7+ ♔e6 38.♕g7 ♕xg7 39.♖xg7 ♖xe3 40.♔f2 ♗e4, and wins.
36...♗h2+
White resigned in view of 37.♔xh2 ♖xh3+ 38.♔xh3 ♕g4+, and mate.



Endgame Competence

In New In Chess 2010/7 on page 68 Mr. Doggers refers to the game Aronian-Kramnik, Shanghai 2010, and writes:



position after 48...♖b5

'After 49.♗g6? Black has the trick 49...♖b3+! 50.♔c2 ♖b2+, as Kramnik pointed out.'

To me it seems that White should continue 50.♔c4 ♖b2 51.h5, with an easy draw, for example 51...♔f6 52.♔c3 ♖xa2 (what else?) 53.♔b3 ♖a1 54.♗h7 ♔g5 55.♗g6 ♔h6 56.♔b4, and Black cannot strengthen his position.

I do not want to question GM Kramnik's endgame competence in any way. Personally I believe that he gave this line immediately after the game and that he must have realized that it was a draw during the subsequent analysis.

David Navara
Prague, Czech Republic

Rowson's Reviews

The moment I begin to read a new issue of New In Chess I start with Jonathan Rowson's book review. The reason for this is simple: 'get through the worst first!' It is sheer torture to read Rowson's self-inflated ego forays and pseudo-academic meanderings, mostly devoid of an objective appraisal of the books he is supposed to be reviewing.

His latest effort, 'A Fine Bromance' in New In Chess 2010/7, takes the cake. A presumptuous and pretentious melange of vapid assumptions relating to Kasparov and Karpov which even fails to be funny. The book in question, *Kasparov vs Karpov 1988-2009*, is in Rowson's own words an important publication in the Kasparov's book series. The book is priced at almost 40 euros and is not cheap. Is it too much to expect that GM Rowson actually reviews it for New In Chess readers?

Boris Kazanski
Berlin, Germany/Sydney, Australia

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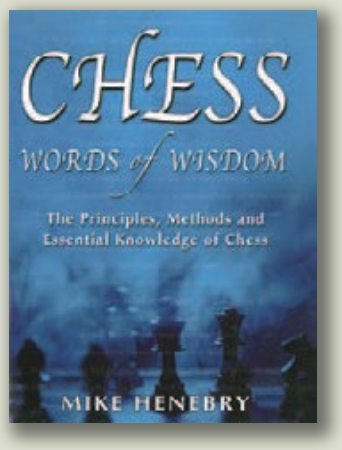
Postscript DJtG:

Jonathan Rowson's column is indeed called Rowson's Reviews. However, from the moment he started writing for us he has not only been free in his choice of books, but also in his approach. We're happy that he exploits this freedom and admire and enjoy his idiosyncratic articles. Perhaps not all of his 'reviews' are 'reviews', but then they are so much more.

Tartakower Biography

I was interested by Genna Sosonko's account of Savielly Tartakower in New In Chess 2010/6. It is said that nobody has attempted a biography of Tartakower. Anyone aspiring to do so might try to discover more about Tartakower's war service. Hints of this emerge from C.T. Ley, *The West London Chess Club: Wartime Gazette*. He appears first in June 1943, not under his own name but as 'Lieutenant Georges Cartier of the Fighting French' (Free French). The photograph opposite *Gazette* p. 113 shows him as sartorially less elegant than one would expect from Sosonko page 41. The pseudonym might be due to personal whim or



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vanity, or perhaps his war-work required a degree of concealment. It is clear, however, that people at the West London Chess Club were aware of the identity of their distinguished visitor, whom they later made an Honorary Member – under his true name! During the war, many strong chess players of various nationalities gravitated to the West London club, so that even Tartakower could not guarantee victory in all the club competitions which he entered.

Adrian Hollis
Wells, Somerset, UK

One Country One Vote

I refer you to the following paragraph of New In Chess 2010/7, p.15: ...'As a symbol of the tragedy of the one country one vote rule, Papua New Guinea is present with three people. One of them wants to vote for Ilyumzhinov, another for Karpov. Kasparov sits talking to their third representative, a quiet dark woman. He is friendly and persuasive, but it is unclear what effects his words will have, as she knows nothing about chess and doesn't care who will be elected'...

I am disappointed to see your usual excellent standards of chess journalism slip so much. Where on earth did this paragraph come from and please why do you think it represents 'a tragedy of the one vote rule'? I think in one paragraph you have confirmed what I think was wrong with the Karpov campaign and that is in their thrust to evict Kirsan they have thrown all standards of good behaviour out of the window.

For a start it would have been very easy to check your facts. Firstly Papua New Guinea were represented at the elections by Lucy Patapo (Delegate) and Brian Jones (Councillor), the PNG non-playing captain. There was no third person. Now as to the PNG vote maybe there wasn't a better informed team at the Olympiad than PNG. Various members of the Federation spoke with representatives of both tickets in the months before the election, and we were aware of the issues from both camps. (Hardly surprising since members of the PNG team also serve on various FIDE Committees and Commissions.) In the end a decision was taken to abstain, based on the inadequacies of both tickets. This decision was taken prior to the congress and our delegate then attended with these voting instructions.

What the PNGCF actually did not do was succumb to attempts to convince our delegate to change her vote at the last moment. Indeed we regarded such approaches as improper, and had asked both campaigns to allow us to make our own decision based on the facts in front of us. One campaign ignored this suggestion, and are now clearly unhappy with the decision we took. Sadly this unhappiness extends to misrepresenting what actually happened.

Otherwise I hope your magazine continues with its usual excellent standards.

Rupert Jones
Leeds, UK

Postscript DJtG:

The main reason why I included the paragraph about the Papua New Guinea delegates in my article on the General Assembly in Khanty-Mansiysk was my unhappiness with the one-country-one-vote rule in the FIDE elections. Not because I think that there should be different rights for different countries (in an ideal world the one-country-one-vote rule would indeed be ideal), but because of the way this rule has been exploited by Kirsan Ilyumzhinov to manipulate his re-election in Turin and Khanty-Mansiysk.

The story about the three delegates of PNG (including the fact that the lady whose voice was going to decide on the vote of PNG was not really interested in chess and knew nothing about the issues at stake) I had from a source who was directly involved in the negotiations. If these facts were untrue, and I have no reason not to believe you, I sincerely regret this and apologize for this mistake.

You suggest that it would have been easy to check this. As you know it was a turbulent congress and there simply was no time to verify or double-check everything that I heard or saw. As the delegates of PNG were only going to be mentioned in this one brief paragraph (and in fact not in their capacity of PNG delegates) I forgive myself for not double-checking this, but at the same time I fully understand that the delegates involved see this differently.

COLOPHON

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If not for him...

What would the chess landscape in the Netherlands look like if Max Euwe (1901-81) hadn't become World Champion in 1935 by defeating Alexander Alekhine? Would we have seen world-class tournaments in Amsterdam, Tilburg and Wijk aan Zee? Would New In Chess exist? We doubt it. After he won the highest title Euwe wrote and co-authored countless books on chess, gave hundreds of simuls and developed into a tireless promoter of the game, first in his own country, later all over the world in his capacity of FIDE president (1970-78). In the weeks before Christmas the Max Euwe Centre in Amsterdam celebrates the 75th birthday of his victory with various events including a lecture and a simul by World Champion Vishy Anand. We remember the great Dutchman with this rare photo taken of him in the company of his great predecessor Capablanca in the 1930s.

Tiebreak only blemish on marvellous Tal Memorial

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam

Within a handful of years the Tal Memorial in the heart of Moscow has grown into one of the most prestigious chess summits in the world. Firmly supported by political heavyweights Alexander Zhukov and Arkady Dvorkovich, the organizers pamper the players as if they were royalty and treat a worldwide audience to a first-rate show. The fifth edition, again held with a spectacular view of Red Square, saw riveting chess and set new standards for video coverage both at the venue and online. At the end of a long and crazy last round three players finished with the same number of points. Two of them, Levon Aronian and Sergey Karjakin, were declared the winners. That was a pity. The Tal Memorial, a symbol of Russia's resurrection as a chess superpower, deserves one undisputed winner.

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The dramatic last round after close to four hours. Shakhriyar Mamedyarov understands he has bungled his game against Boris Gelfand, Hikaru Nakamura still hopes for a win, Sergey Karjakin fights for a draw and Vladimir Kramnik is determined to beat Alexey Shirov.

Maybe the eternal traffic jams in the centre of Moscow do have a positive side after all. Perhaps it was this slow-motion movie of endless lines of cars inching forward on congested roads that helped the participants in the Tal Memorial to keep their sanity. Just imagine: for more than two weeks they were going to stay in the Ritz Carlton on Tverskaya Street in a world of opulence and comfort that caters to the wishes and desires of the rich and famous. In the afternoon they played their games of chess at a stone's throw from the Ritz, in Gum on Red Square, one of the most extravagant department stores in the world, where it would be an insult to the customers to put price tags on anything in the display windows. Spend a fortnight on this cloud and you're surely bound to lose touch with reality.

But fortunately there were the traffic jams. Of course cars were at hand to take the players from the Ritz to Gum if they so desired, but who would be tempted to go for a 30-minute ride of mainly standing still if it's a five-minute walk? The only thing you have to do is take the passageway under Mokhovaya Street, have a brush with the other side of Moscow and before you know it you're in Gum. In the passageway there are lines of booths where Muscovites can buy a wide variety of goods while rushing home or to work. Filled with warm gushes of wind emanating from the Metro it is also a popular place for tramps, beggars and drunks seeking shelter from the cold. At regular intervals they are removed by the police, but I also saw a lady leaving her booth and spraying disinfectant at a drunk lying too close to her business till he grudgingly moved. When you emerge from the passageway at the other end, Red Square is spectacularly beckoning, but before you enter it through Resurrection Gate there is a last reminder of the dichotomy of Russian society. In front of the gate is a copper plate indicating the centre of the Russian Empire, which serves as the Trevi Fountain of the capital. Here tourists throw coins over their shoulders hoping to come back to Moscow one day. While they do so, a group of pensioners starts jumping and wrestling to catch the coins. Their daily harvest cannot amount to much. As the production cost of kopeks exceeds their value, there are plans in Russia to abolish coins.

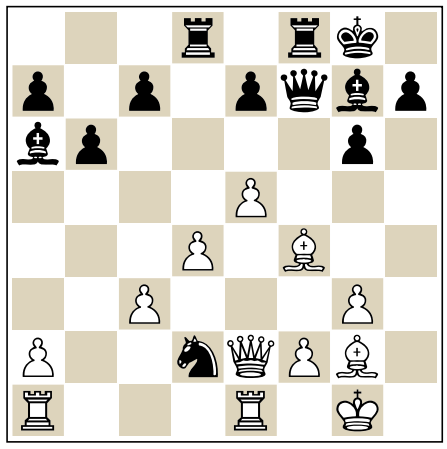
Invigorated by their brief walk, the players are welcomed in Gum by outstanding playing conditions. Who wouldn't want to be a professional chess player if you can ponder your moves with a view of Red Square, while munching a delicious sandwich or sipping an espresso? But the players weren't the only ones that were spoiled. In the playing hall the spectators could follow the live commentary by '64' editor Mark Glukhovsky, Genna Sosonko and a choice of other guests, while outside the hall they could watch the action on high-definition television screens. What's more, this same state-of-the-art coverage was offered to the visitors of the tournament website.

The organization of the Tal Memorial was a combined effort of the team of Ilya Levitov, the new acting head of the Russian Chess Federation, and that of his predecessor, Alexander Bakh, the head of the Association of Russian Chess Federations. But all of their efforts would have been in vain without the massive financial support guaranteed by the two main movers behind chess in Russia, Alexander Zhukov, Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Russian Olympic Committee, and Arkady Dvorkovich, Chief Economic Advisor to President Medvedev. They regularly visited the event and as true lovers of the game they insisted on playing a couple of games with the participants on the final day.

Looking back, it was ironic that such a royal tournament ended in an almost bizarre show of egalitarianism. At the end of a protracted last round, in which Fate seemed to change her mind continuously, three players emerged at the top of the standings, and there might easily have been four.

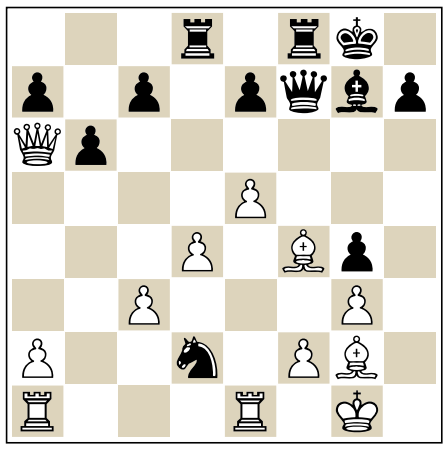
Still, before the last round the safest bet seemed to be that there would be one sole winner and that his name would be Shakhriyar Mamedyarov. Since working

regularly with Elizbar Ubilava, the former trainer of World Champion Anand, the Azeri grandmaster has made steady progress. His openings have become more solid and his self-confidence has grown. At the Tal Memorial he played inspired chess (don't miss the mind-boggling win over Shirov that he annotated for us), and at the start of the last round he topped the table. Mamedyarov was half a point ahead of Sergey Karjakin and Levon Aronian, who both were Black in the last round. Around the time that the game that Mamedyarov himself played as Black against out-of-form Boris Gelfand entered its critical phase, Aronian had already drawn against Eljanov, while Karjakin was in trouble against Wang Hao.

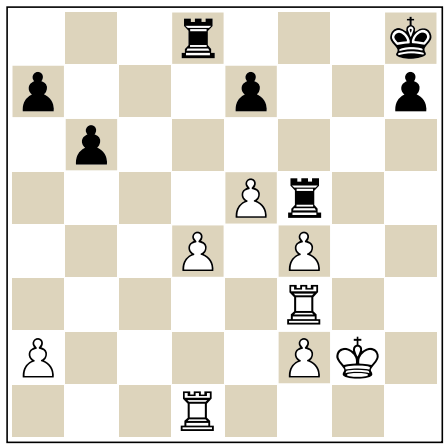


Gelfand-Mamedyarov
position after 20...♘xd2

Against a Grünfeld Defence White obtained at least an optical plus (look at Black's bishop on g7), but Black's tactical counterplay is probably enough to keep the balance. **21.♕xa6** An easier way to keep a slight advantage was 21.♕xd2. **21...g5** And Mamedyarov is not afraid of risky play either. Still, a safe way to a draw was 21...♗h6 22.♗xh6 ♕xf2+ 23.♔h1 ♖f5 24.♕e2 ♖h5+ 25.♕xh5 gxh5 26.♗e3 ♕xg3 27.♗xd2. **22.♗e3 g4 23.♗f4**



23...♘f3+? And here he should have gone 23...♗h6, when after 24.♕e2 ♗xf4 25.♕xg4+ ♕g6 26.♕xg6+ hxg6 27.gxf4 ♖xf4 the logical outcome would be a draw. **24.♗xf3 gxf3 25.♕d3** White will round up the f3 pawn, and a pawn is a pawn. **25...♕h5 26.♖e3 c5 27.♖xf3 cxd4 28.cxd4 ♗h6** After 28...♖xd4 29.♕xd4 ♕xf3 Gelfand indicated 30.♕d7 as winning for White. **29.♔g2 ♗xf4 30.gxf4 ♕f5 31.♖d1 ♔h8 32.♕xf5 ♖xf5**



33.d5 The central pawn front decides easily. **33...b5 34.♖d4 a5 35.♖c3 ♖df8 36.♖c7** Black resigned.

For Gelfand this last-round win was a small consolation after a tournament that he described as 'a nightmare'. Right from the start he realized that he lacked energy, the inevitable result of a year in which he had played too much. Symbolical for his bad form was his resignation in a drawn position in Round 8 against Wang Hao, a position that Jan Timman analyses in his article on the Tal Memorial in this issue.

For Mamedyarov there was nothing else to do now but wait. He had finished with the same number of points as Aronian. For the moment it looked as if the tie-break rules favoured the Armenian, but with three games still in progress it was too early to draw conclusions. The next blow for Mamedyarov was that Karjakin first drifted into a totally lost position against Wang Hao and then miraculously saved the draw.

With this draw Karjakin also finished on 5½ points, a great success for the former Ukrainian, who now plays under the Russian flag, in his new home town. In high spirits he showed the last phase of his game to the press, happily ex-

NEW IN CHESS

The lobby of the Moscow Ritz Carlton, the opulent home of the grandmasters during the Tal Memorial and the World Blitz.

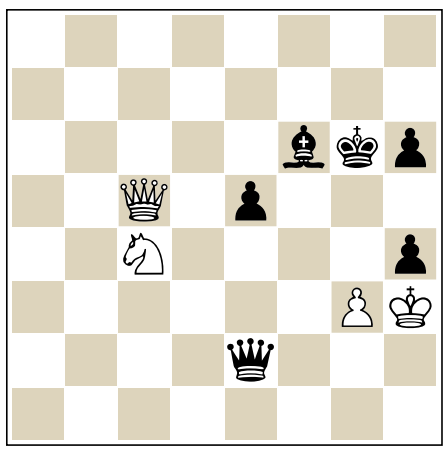
NEW IN CHESS

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov seemed well on his way to win the Tal Memorial until missed chances in the last round and the tiebreak system crossed his ambitions.

changing jokes with his Chinese opponent, who admirably hid his disappointment. In fact, Karjakin had already been in an excellent mood for the past 24 hours, as he had defeated Vladimir Kramnik in great style in Round 8.

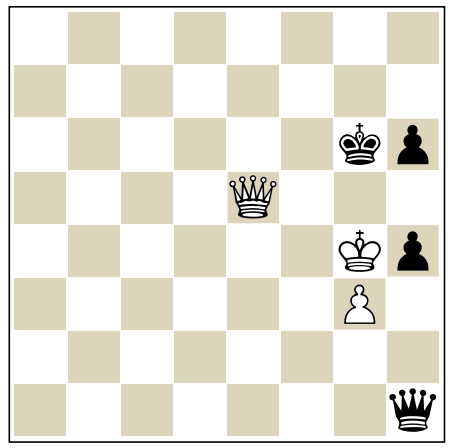
Kramnik, last year's winner, started doubting his form as early as Round 1, when he caught Levon Aronian in the opening and obtained a position that, according to his notes, was winning. Once he failed to convert his advantage things went from bad to worse and chasing a win that no longer existed he underestimated Aronian's counterchances and lost. On his arrival in Moscow, Kramnik was worried about his energy after playing in Shanghai, the Olympiad and Bilbao, but when that first round went so terribly wrong, 'I lost my remaining energy for the next couple of days just remembering this ridiculous game'. In the last round he defeated Alexey Shirov in a wild clash to climb back to 50 per cent and limit the rating damage. Still it was clear that Kramnik had hoped to shine again in the capital of his country.

Late in the evening there was still one game in progress. Grischuk and Nakamura were slogging it out in a battle of monumental proportions. If Nakamura won, he would be the fourth player to finish with 5½ points. Early on, the Russian had invested several pawns in his attack, but after the first time-control the American seemed to be winning. He certainly was winning in the following position that they reached in the endgame.



Grischuk-Nakamura
position after 84.♔h3

Black is almost home, but after close to eight hours of play Nakamura falters. **84...♕f3?** Based on an oversight that may be blamed on fatigue. After 84...♕e1 85.♔g2 ♕xg3+ 86.♔f1 e4 Black wins easily. **85.♘xe5+ ♗xe5 86.♕xe5 ♕h1+ 87.♔g4**



Here Nakamura had 'seen' 87... h5+, but now he obviously saw that the white queen simply takes the pawn. **87...♕d1+ 88.♔h3 ♕h1+ 89.♔g4 ♕d1+ 90.♔h3 ♕h1+** Draw.

As the players signed their scoresheets a loud bang in Gum signalled that it was 10 o'clock and that the building was about to close. But not everyone was ready to leave. It took Nakamura some time to come to terms with the end of the game. In a tweet he called the missed win 'One of the single most disappointing oversights in my whole career.'

The tournament was over, but only now could chief arbiter Geurt Gijssen determine who had actually won it. While workmen around him started to tear down the playing hall in order to rebuild it for the World Blitz two days later, the Dutchman checked the tiebreakers that had been chosen on the eve of the tournament. The first criterion was the result of the direct encounters between the top finishers. As these were all drawn, this criterion didn't produce a winner. The next criterion was the Koya-system, which looks at the number of points the players have collected against opponents that scored more than 50 per cent. Here, too, all three had the same

NEW IN CHESS

In a deserted Gum, Hikaru Nakamura tries to come to terms with 'one of the single most disappointing oversights in my career'.

score. Only the third tiebreaker, the Sonneborn-Berger system, brought some clarity, as here Aronian and Karjakin had scored marginally better than poor Mamedyarov, who thus dropped out of the race. And so the fourth and last tiebreaker was only applied to Aronian and Karjakin. Which of them had scored the highest number of wins? As they both had won two games they were declared the joint winners of the fifth Tal Memorial.

Whether this was a satisfactory solution is a matter of taste. When I asked Mr Gijssen about his opinion on tiebreakers, he said flatly: 'All tiebreakers are nonsense!'

That was clear language, although we soon discovered that we differed in our opinions on how to avoid such tiebreakers. Although he had nothing against rapid games to decide a winner, Mr Gijssen opined that he didn't see anything wrong with a tournament with more than one winner. There I disagree. It seems to me that a magnificent tournament like the Tal Memorial deserves one undisputed winner.

Which, obviously, is not intended in any manner as criticism of the achievement of either Karjakin or Aronian. Both players once again confirmed their positions in the world elite.

Sergey Karjakin keeps reaping the fruits of the serious work he has been doing with his Russian team.

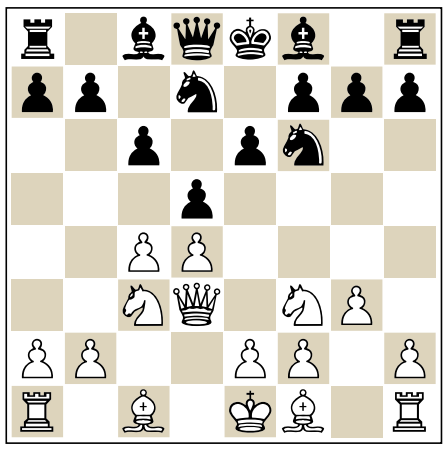
With his last-round draw Levon Aronian finished the year with a 2800+ rating, a breathtaking barrier that he crossed as only the sixth player in history. Naturally, he was happy with his recent jump in the rating list, but Aronian wouldn't be Aronian if he didn't put his achievement into perspective. 'I thought it mattered. When I played that last game I thought, let's not lose and finish the year at 2800. But now I realize that that's just rubbish. It's not about the rating, it's about progress. In the Olympiad I played well, but in the European Championship, where I had a tremendous score, I didn't play well. I was never under the magic of the ratings. People try to categorize you... who is a dog and who is a cat. I was in third place in the world rankings before. At the time I was fully aware that this was completely undeserved. I was not playing strongly enough for that. I didn't have the knowledge. Now I think that maybe with some training and hard work I will deserve 2800, although in general I see this wave of inflation. But it's good to be part of this club and stay there for a while. I think that at the current moment I do belong to this top. I always try to progress, I always look forward to the next tournament. I'm never content with my own play. I have this wish to see how good I can be. That's what I look forward to discovering. I really want to know what my weaknesses and strengths are. I want to see this whole picture. To find out if I am as good as these other guys. Or whether I am much better.'

NOTES BY

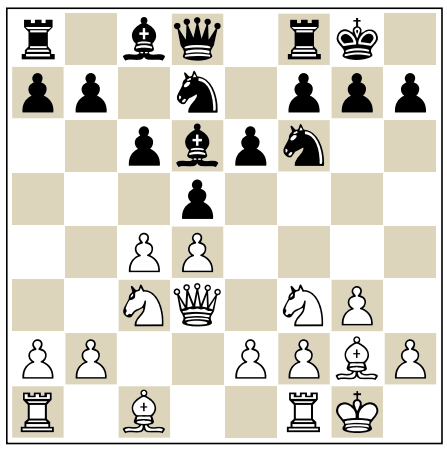
Levon Aronian

SL 6.2 – D43
Levon Aronian
Boris Gelfand
Moscow Tal Memorial 2010 (3)

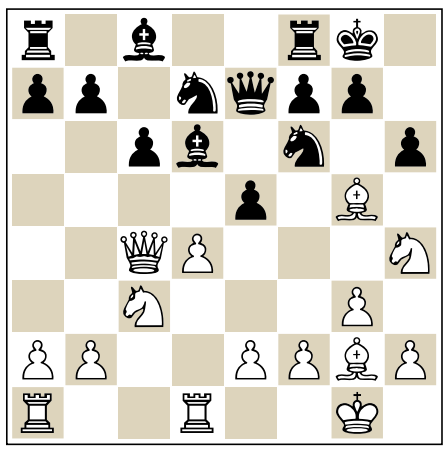
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.♕d3 In view of Boris's experience in the Slav Defence I decided to avoid entering a theoretical dispute, and I employed a rare variation which one can learn from the games of David Navara.
5...♘bd7 After my move Boris stopped to think, and he decided not to go in for the sharper variation beginning with the moves 5...dxc4 6.♕xc4 b5 7.♕d3.
6.g3
David prefers to play 6.e4, which leads to endgame positions in which White retains pressure. I think that transposing into Catalan lines is also interesting, especially since this has been played many times by a great expert on this opening – Oleg Romanishin.



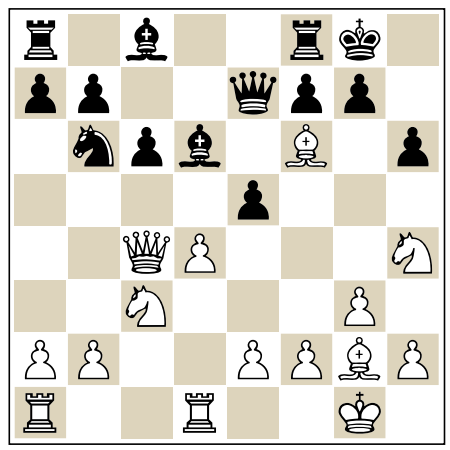
6...♗d6 A rare move. The usual continuation is 6...♗e7. With the move in the game Black lets it be known that his plan consists in advancing ...e5.
7.♗g2 Initially I thought that 7.♗f4 was a good move, but then the position after 7...♗xf4 8.gxf4 dxc4 9.♕xc4 b5 10.♕xc6 ♖b8 ceased to appeal to me. 10.♕d3 is stronger, although it is not clear whether this gives White anything.
7...0-0 8.0-0
8.♗f4 is interesting, when Black does best to reply 8...♗xf4 9.gxf4 b6, and if 10.cxd5 cxd5, with the further idea of playing ...a5 and ...♗a6. In this case the position is more sterile.



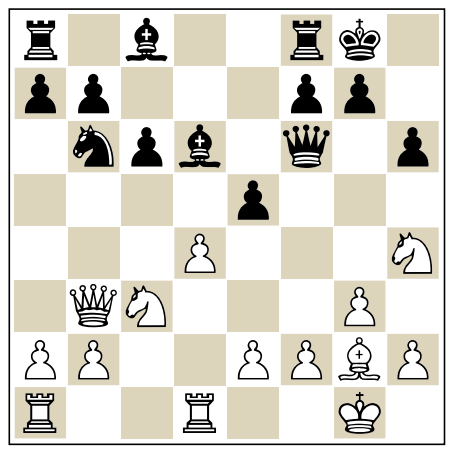
8...dxc4
The correct move. Since White now wants to play ♘d2 with the idea of advancing e4, the time has come to put into action the general idea of the 6...♗d6 variation.
9.♕xc4 e5 10.♖d1 ♕e7
If 10...exd4 I was planning 11.♕xd4 ♗c5 12.♕h4, although after 12...♕e7 Black is only a trifle worse. 11.♘xd4 is possibly stronger, and if 11...♘e5 then 12.♕b3 with the idea of ♗g5.
11.♗g5 During the game I initially thought that 11.♘g5 was a serious alternative to the move in the game, but on closer inspection I realized that after 11...♘b6 and 12...exd4 Black has no problems.
11...h6 After 11...exd4 12.♘xd4 the game could have transposed into the variation after 10...exd4 11.♘xd4, which I think gives White a small advantage.
12.♘h4



I was planning this move when I played 11.♗g5. The other possible move 12.♗xf6 would have given White slightly the more comfortable game, but after seeing such an interesting idea I decided not to avoid it. Especially since I did not see any refutation.
12...♘b6 The only move.
13.♗xf6



13...♕xf6
I thought that this was the only move. We both thought that after 13...♘xc4 14.♗xe7 ♗xe7 15.d5 Black had problems, but analysis showed that Black has two strong moves giving him a good game. For example, after 15...c5 we both thought that 16.♘e4 with the threat of d6 was very strong, but it turns out that after 16...♘xb2 17.♖dc1 ♗xh4 18.gxh4 b6 the knight on b2 feels fine. It should be mentioned that also after 15...♘xb2 Black does not experience any great problems, since if 16.♖db1 he has 16...♗b4, while after 16.♖dc1 cxd5, despite appearances to the contrary, it is possible that Black is alright.
14.♕b3



Now Black cannot prevent White from playing d5, and I felt very proud of myself.

14...♗c7

A very bad decision, after which Black's position is practically indefensible. It was essential to play 14...♗e6 15.d5 cxd5 16.♘xd5 ♘xd5 17.♗xd5 ♗c5. Despite the fact that our experience suggests that White has achieved the desired piece arrangement and pawn structure, the position remains roughly equal thanks to the poor placing of the white knight.

From the purely practical point of view 12.♘h4 was a very successful move, since in all the variations where Black achieves equality he has to go for continuations which at first sight are illogical.

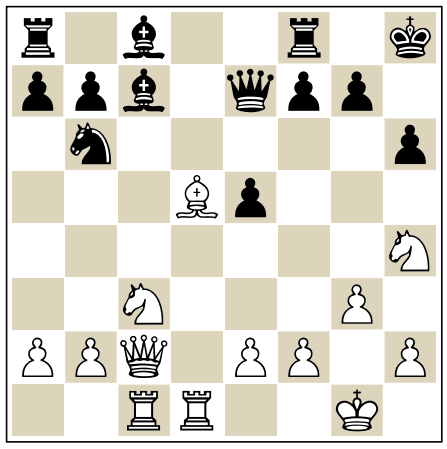
15.d5 cxd5

I was expecting that Boris would try to complicate the position by 15...g5, but of course I had the suspicion that after 16.♘e4 ♕g7 17.d6 Black would not hold out for long.

16.♗xd5 This way. To allow Black to exchange knights and bring out his bishop to b6 would be crazy.

16...♔h8 It is hard to offer Black any good advice. His position is strategically lost.

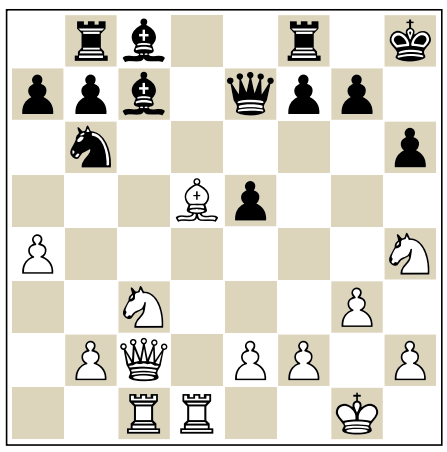
17.♖ac1 ♕e7 18.♕c2



To avoid any stupid ideas such as sacrificing on f7, I decided to move my queen to c2, at the same time, just in case, vacating the b3-square for my bishop.

18...♖b8 19.a4

19.♗b3 was possibly stronger, but it was difficult for me to choose from the moves, since there were too many in the position.



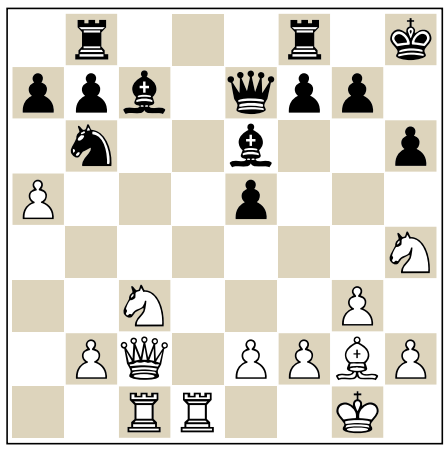
19...♗h3

19...♗d6 or 19...♗d8 was more resilient.

20.♗g2

The correct decision. After the defender of the light squares disappears, Black will be helpless.

20...♗e6 21.a5



21...♘a8

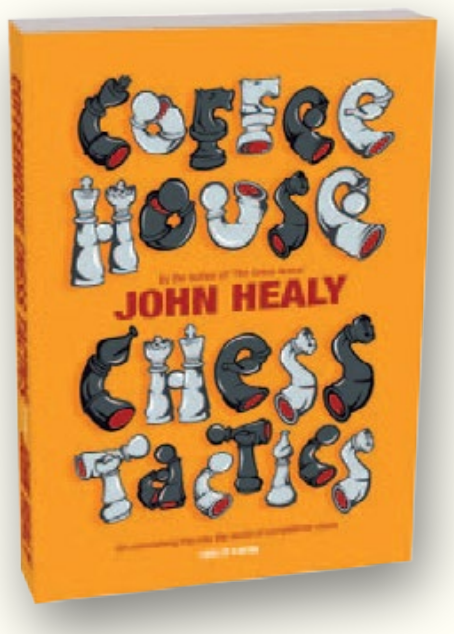
Sadly necessary. After 21...♘d7 22.♘d5 ♗xd5 23.♖xd5 the black pieces stand even worse than in the game.

22.♘d5 ♗xd5 23.♖xd5 ♕e6 24.b4

A solid move. Knowing the mastery of Boris Abramovich in defence, I wanted to play solidly, trying not to allow his pieces to break free.

24...♗d8

After 24...♗d6 25.♖cd1 ♗xb4 26.♕e4 ♗c3 27.♘f5 White has a decisive attack.



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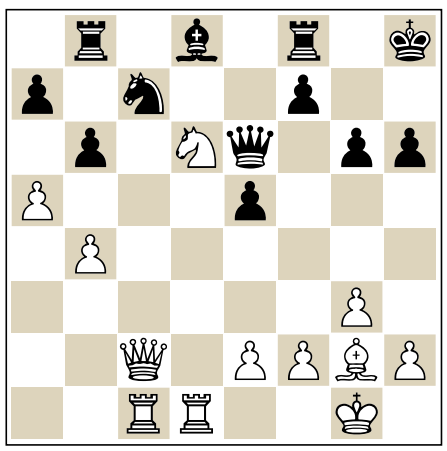
Levon Aronian: 'I want to see this whole picture. To find out if I am as good as these other guys. Or whether I am much better.'

25.♘f5 I could have allowed Black to exchange his bishop for my knight, but the idea with the knight manoeuvre appealed to me.

25...g6 26.♘d6 ♘c7

The knight tries to leap out from its cramped stall.

27.♖dd1 b6

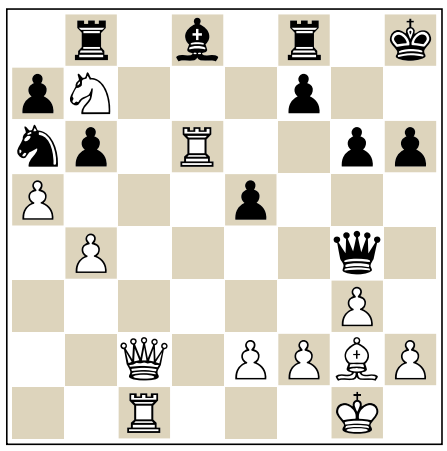


28.♘b7 After calculating the variations, I decided to try and win as quickly as possible.

28...♘a6

After 28...♘b5 I had found the winning 29.♕d3 a6 30.♘xd8 ♖bxd8 31.♕xd8 ♖xd8 32.♖xd8+ ♔g7 33.♗d5, while after 28...♗e7 29.♕d2 Black would have lost his h6 pawn, since after 29...♗g5 30. f4 White wins a piece.

29.♖d6 ♕g4



30.♕b2

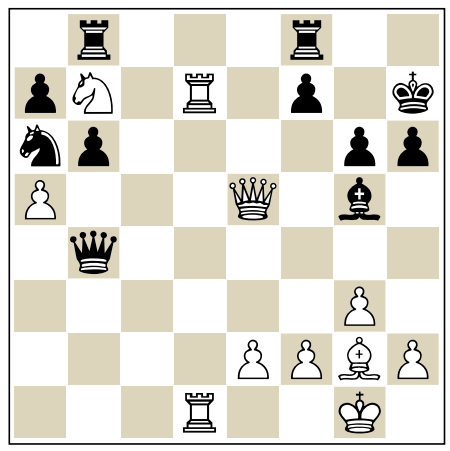
Surprised by the fact that I did not have an instant win, I planned to give mate while Black was engaged in regrouping his forces.

30...♕xb4

30...♔g8 was more resilient, after which White would have won most quickly by 31.b5 ♘c5 32. ♘xc5 bxc5 33.♖a6.

31.♕xe5+ ♔h7 32.♖d7 ♗g5 33. ♖cd1

33.♘d6 would have concluded the game immediately.



33...♘c5

This leads to a hopeless endgame, but also after 33...♖be8 34.♖xf7+ ♖xf7 35.♕xe8 the game would not last very long.

34.♘xc5 ♕xc5 35.♕xc5 bxc5 36. ♖xa7 c4 37.a6

Thanks to the move e3 White can even get up to mischief.

37...c3 38.♖c7 ♖bc8 39.♖xc8 ♖xc8 40.e3 ♗e7 41.♖c1

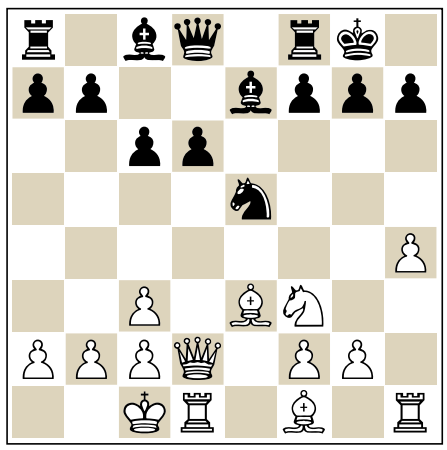
Black resigned. After 41...♖c7 42. ♗b7 the white pawn promotes to a queen.

NOTES BY

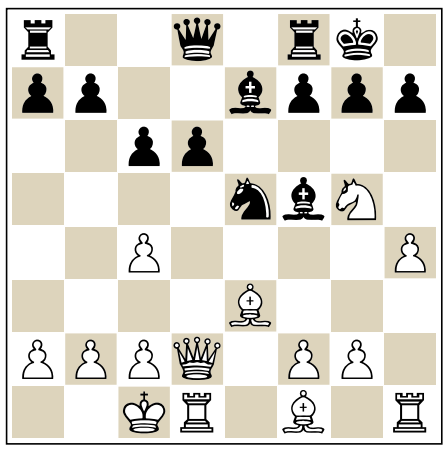
Sergey Karjakin

RG 3.5 – C42
Sergey Karjakin
Vladimir Kramnik
Moscow Tal Memorial 2010 (8)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6
The anticipated Petroff Defence, which had occurred with both of us in this tournament.
3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.♘c3 ♘xc3 6.dxc3 ♗e7 7.♗e3 0-0 8.♕d2 ♘d7 9.0-0-0 ♘e5
Against Nakamura four rounds earlier Vladimir Borisovich played 9...♖e8, but in the game with me he decided to go into Gelfand's favourite variation.
10.h4 c6



With this move Black prepares the manoeuvre ♗g4, ♗e2 ♘xf3, gxf3 ♗h5, which at the moment is not possible on account of ♕d5 at the end of the variation.
11.c4!? A rare continuation, which has been employed once by Gashimov. In the first round I played the main move 11.♔b1 against Gelfand, but I wasn't happy with the outcome of the opening.
11...♗e6
This was played in the source game. It is by no means the only move, and since the position is a fresh one, only future practice will show which is the most precise move order.
12.♘g5! Without spending time on the defence of the pawn, White forces the bishop on e6 to declare its intentions.
12...♗f5



A novelty! Black has lured the knight to g5 in the hope of later driving it away by ...h6, thereby gaining time. Gelfand played 12...♘xc4, which looks more critical, but also more risky.
13.♔b1
Since I didn't know the move 12...♗f5, and Vladimir Borisovich's opening prestige is very high, at the board I decided not to launch into a discussion after 13.f3, but for the moment to simply make a useful move.
Nevertheless, by analogy with the game, 13.f3!? h6 14.♗e2! deserves serious consideration. It is possible that my opponent underestimated this attacking idea. Of course, a further examination is required, but playing this position with black is terrifying, to say the least!
By contrast, the computer recommendation 13.f4 is totally undistinguished. After 13...♘g4 14.♗d3 ♕d7 Black controls the key squares g4 and f5, which gives him excellent play.
13...♖e8?!
Underestimating the knight on g5. The opportunity should have been taken to drive it away. After 13...h6! 14.♘f3 ♖e8 15.♘d4 ♗h7! Black has a perfectly good game.
14.f3 h6 15.♗e2!

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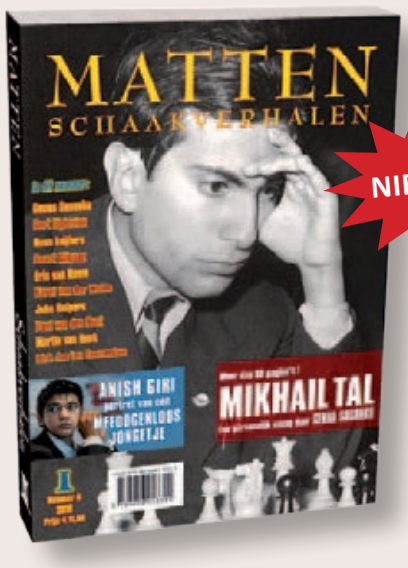

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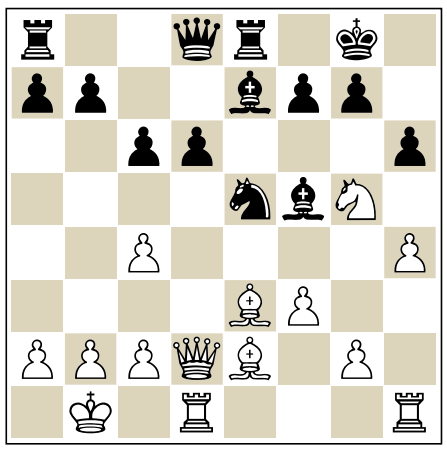
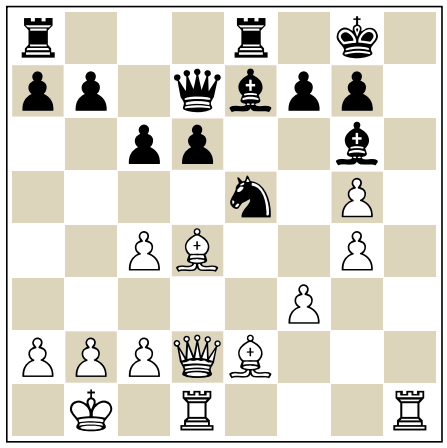


White reinforces his f3 pawn, simply leaving his knight en prise. As Gelfand said, with this move I honoured the memory of Tal!

15...d5

A human decision. Black replies with a counter-stroke in the centre. If the sacrifice is accepted, then after 15...hxg5 16.hxg5 White prepares g4 and f4, and the attack develops of its own accord.

For example: 16...♕d7 (16...d5?! 17.g4 ♗e6 18.f4 dxc4 19.♕e1 and White has a winning attack) 17.g4 ♗g6 (17...♗h7 18.♖xh7 ♔xh7 19.♗d3+ ♔g8 20.♕h2 ♗d8 21.♕h7+ ♔f8 22.♗f5 ♖e6 23.♗d4 and wins) 18.♗d4!



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

(an important move; White prepares 19.f4!) 18...f6 (White is clearly better after both 18...♕e6 19.f4 ♗e4 20.f5 ♕c8 21.♕f4 and 18...♗d8 19.f4) 19.gxf6 ♗xf6 20.g5 ♗d8 21.f4 ♗f5 22.fxe5 dxe5 23.♗d3 exd4 24.♕h2 and White is on top.

And if Black simply makes a neutral move, say 15...♗f8, then after 16.g4 ♗d7 17.♗d4 White has the initiative for free!

16.g4 ♗g6

Again human-style play. Black keeps his bishop in an active position, but at the same time it comes under attack by f4-f5!

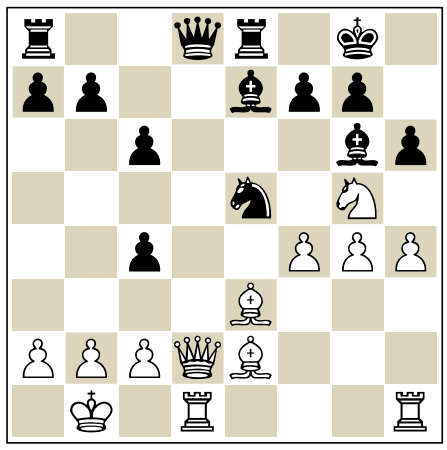
In view of this it made sense to retreat 16...♗c8, a rather ugly move, but here at any event the bishop is not hit by f5. But it too would not have got Black out of his difficulties. After 17.cxd5 cxd5 18.♕xd5!? (there may also be other promising continuations) 18...♕xd5 19.♖xd5 ♗xg5 20.hxg5 ♘c6 21.♖d3 ♘b4 22.♗d2 ♘xd3 23.♗xd3 hxg5 24.♗h7+ ♔h8 25.♗xg5 in view of the activity of White's pieces he retains the advantage.

17.f4

Black has not yet grabbed anything, and the white pawns are already moving forward. Even on general grounds it is apparent that White has a clear advantage!

17...dxc4

Here my eyes began to be dazzled by the mass of possibilities! After 17...♘xc4 18.♗xc4 dxc4 19.♕f2 ♕a5 20.f5 White has a very strong attack.



18.♕c3

The most natural, but 18.♕c1!? was also very strong, and now:

A) 18...♕c7 19.fxe5 hxg5 20.e6 b5 21.h5 ♗e4 22.♖d7 ♕e5 23.exf7+ ♔xf7 24.♗d4 ♕e6 25.♕xg5 ♖g8 26.♕f4+ ♔e8 27.♖xe7+ ♕xe7 28.♖e1 clearly favours White;

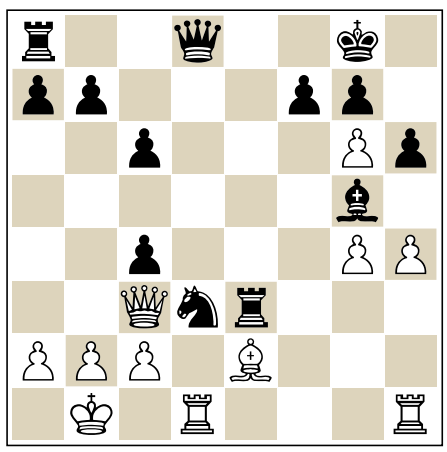
B) 18...♕a5 19.h5 hxg5 20.hxg6 gxf4 21.♗xf4 ♘xg6 22.♗xc4 b5 23.♗b3 c5 24.♗d5, and in view of the powerful bishop at d5 White has an obvious advantage.

18...♘d3

The only move.

19.f5 ♗xg5 20.fxg6 ♖xe3

Up to here I had played well, but now I went wrong.



21.gxf7+?

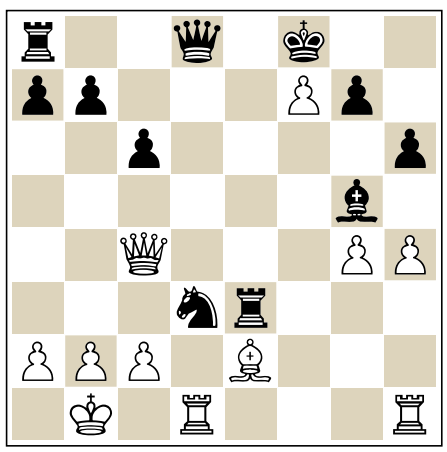
I realized that I was forcing the king to go to f8 and I thought that this was not at all bad, but in such sharp positions you have to calculate variations and not trust general considerations.

Stronger was 21.♕xc4! ♗xh4 22.♗xd3 ♕e7 23.♗f5, with the simple idea of a3 and ♖d7, against which Black has no satisfactory defence.

21...♔f8

21...♔h7 is not possible because of 22.♕xc4 ♖xe2 23.f8♕ ♕xf8 24.♕xd3+ and wins.

22.♕xc4



22...♖xe2?

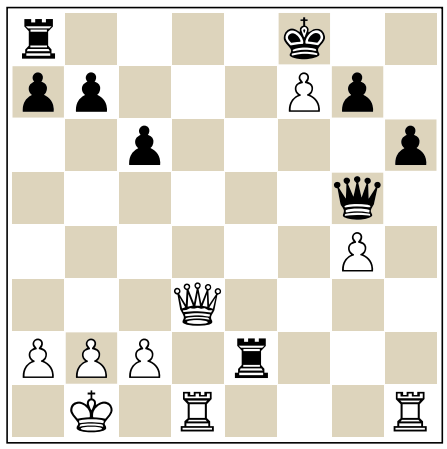
Over the last six half-moves there have been five captures, and by a reflex action Black continues eliminating the main forces of the white army. But he should have been satisfied with something less. After 22...♗xh4 23.♗xd3 ♗f6 the f7 pawn securely covers the black king, and the white rooks are not able to get to e8.

23.hxg5 ♕xg5?!

Continuing to destroy everything, but this is already the decisive mistake.

However, also after 23...b5 24.♕b3 ♕d5 25.♕xd5 cxd5 26.♖xd3 the rook ending should be won for White.

24.♕xd3

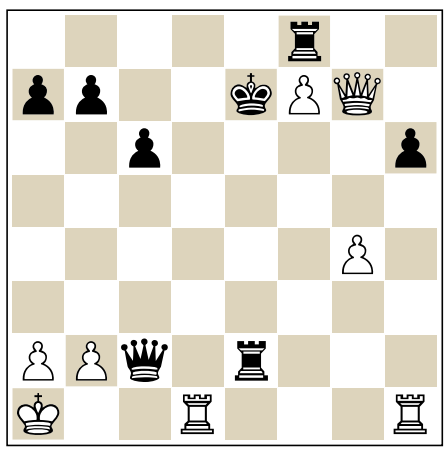


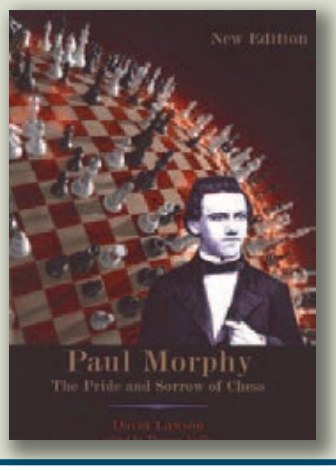
A double threat! Black's rook is hanging, and on his next move White will penetrate with his queen to h7 and develop a decisive attack.

24...♕e3 25.♕h7 ♕e4 26.♕g8+ ♔e7 27.♕xg7 ♕xc2+ 28.♔a1

The white queen holds the b2-point while also participating in the attack.

28...♖f8





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29.♖hf1
With the threat of 30.♕f8. White would also have won by 29.♕d4 c5 30.♕d6+ ♔xf7 31.♖hf1+ ♖f2 32.♖xf2+ ♕xf2 33.♕xh6, with decisive threats.
29...♖d2 30.♖fe1+ ♖e2
After 30...♔d7 31.♖c1 ♖e2 32.♖f1 Black loses material.
31.♕c3 ♔xf7 32.♕f3+
Black resigned.

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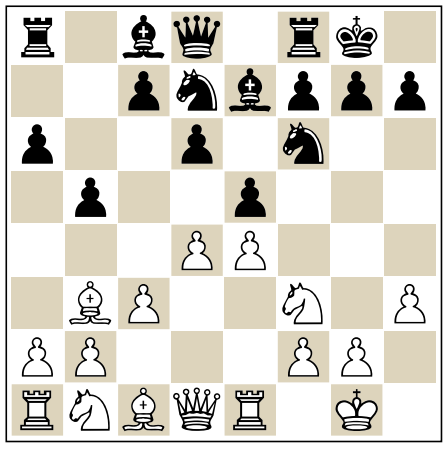
Since he started working with Vishy Anand's former second Elizbar Ubilava, Shakhriyar Mamedyarov's self-confidence seems to have grown.

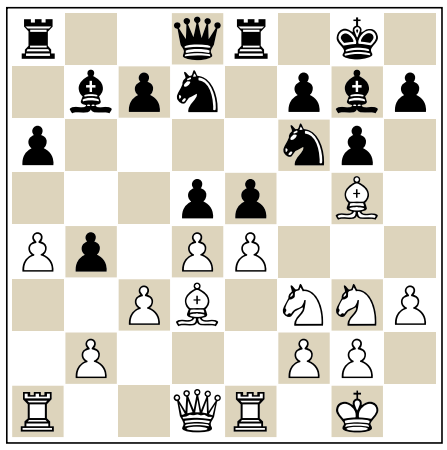
NOTES BY
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov

RL 25.15 – C95
Alexey Shirov
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Moscow Tal Memorial 2010 (3)

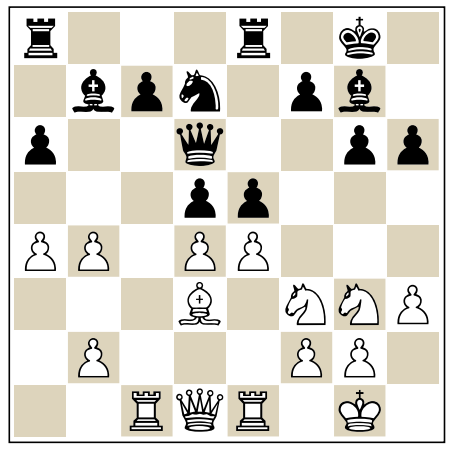
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♘b8 10.d4 ♘bd7



11.♘bd2
In the blitz tournament after the 2006 Tal Memorial, here against Bologan I automatically played 11...♖e8??, but fortunately my opponent did not see 12.♗xf7+! ♔xf7 13.♘g5+, when Black loses his queen.
11...♗b7 12.♗c2 ♖e8 13.♘f1 ♗f8 14.♘g3 g6 15.a4 ♗g7 16.♗d3 d5
Before playing 17.♗g5 my opponent thought for about 25 minutes, although this move is well known and theory gives White an advantage!
17.♗g5 b4



Up to this point I played very quickly, although I couldn't forget the bitter experience which I had in a game with Shirov two years ago, also at the Tal Memorial. Shirov was playing badly in that tournament and I wanted to exploit this factor. However, that day Alexey played with inspiration and won his only game in the tournament, for which he received the brilliancy prize for the best game of the tournament.
In my preparations my plan was completely different, and I was intending to play more solidly, but when this position was reached I could not resist the temptation to make the move 17...b4!.
Here I was surprised by my opponent's quick response, since 17...b4 was a novelty. It is obvious that White has a wide choice of moves, but the consequences are very unclear, and in my opinion 18.cxb4 is by no means the strongest.
18.cxb4 h6 19.♗xf6 ♕xf6 20.♖c1!? In my preliminary analyses I examined 20.exd5!? very thoroughly. Here Black can reply 20...exd4, or else 20...♕d6!?, with compensation for the sacrificed pawn.
20...♕d6



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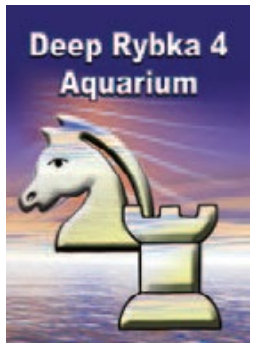

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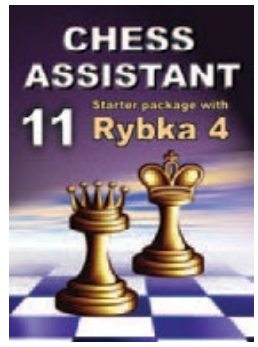

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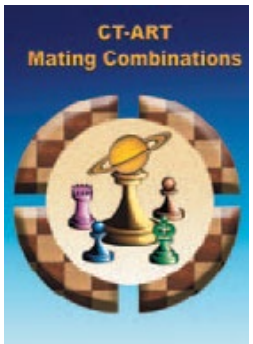

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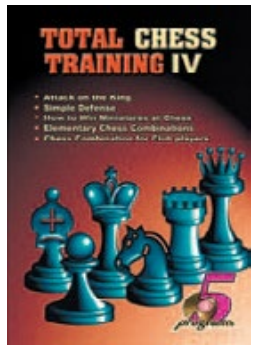

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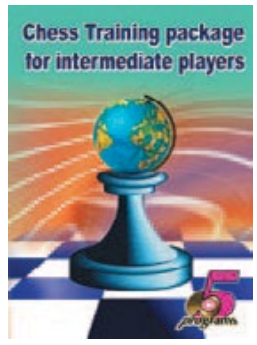

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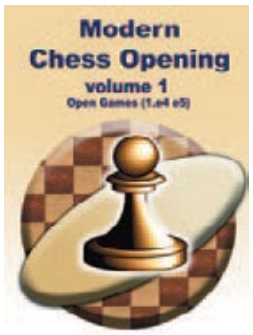

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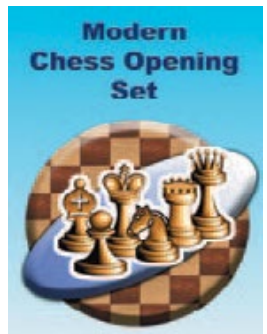

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3	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	IGM	AZE	2763	½	½	*	½	½	1	½	0	1	1	5½	2836
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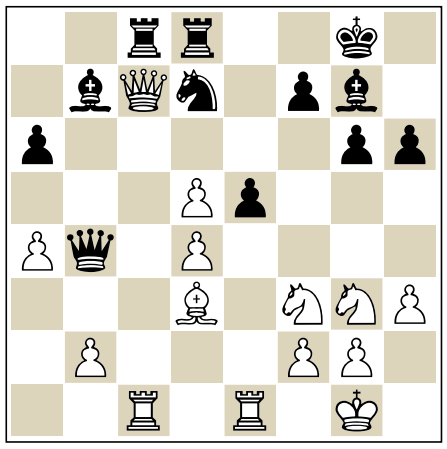
8	Boris Gelfand	IGM	ISR	2741	0	0	1	½	½	0	½	*	1	0	3½	2679
9	Alexey Shirov	IGM	ESP	2735	½	½	0	½	½	0	0	0	*	1	3	2634
10	Pavel Eljanov	IGM	UKR	2742	½	½	0	0	0	½	0	1	0	*	2½	2592

21.b5?

21.exd5 comes into consideration: 21...exd4 22.♘e4 ♕xb4 23.♖xc7 ♘e5 24.♘xe5 ♗xe5 25.♖c4 ♕e7! (if Black captures the b2 pawn with 25...♕xb2, White obtains good play: 26.d6 ♖ad8 27.d7! ♖e7 28.♘c5 ♗d5 29.♖c1, and Black's position looks dangerous) 26.d6 ♗xd6 27.♖xd4 ♖ad8 28.♗f1 ♗c7, with full compensation.

Another possibility is 21.♕c2!? ♕xb4 22.♕xc7 ♖ed8 23.exd5 ♖ac8.

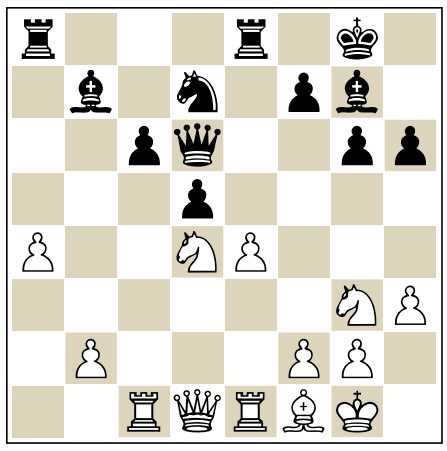


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

When I was thinking about this variation, I thought that I could trap the queen, but White has a defence: 24.♖c4 ♕xc4 25.♕xc4 ♖xc4 26.♗xc4 exd4 27.a5 ♘f6 28.♘xd4 ♘xd5 29.♘f3 ♘b4, with compensation.

21...axb5 22.♗xb5 c6 It becomes clear that Black has excellent compensation for the pawn!

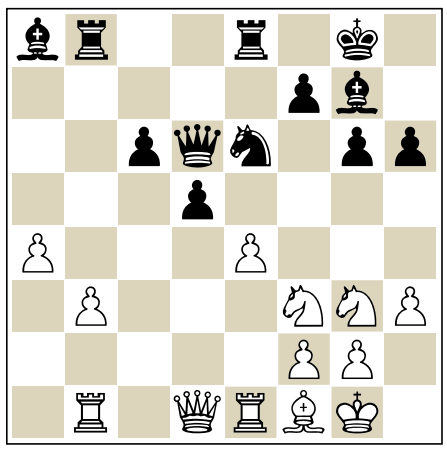
23.♗f1 exd4 24.♘xd4 Against the natural move 24...♘c5? White had prepared a cunning trap.



24...♖ab8! The idea of this move is to play on the b-file, and later bring the rook to b4.

24...♘c5 was indeed wrong because of 25.♘df5 gxf5 26.♘xf5 ♕f8 27.♘xg7 ♔xg7 28.♕d4+ and White wins.

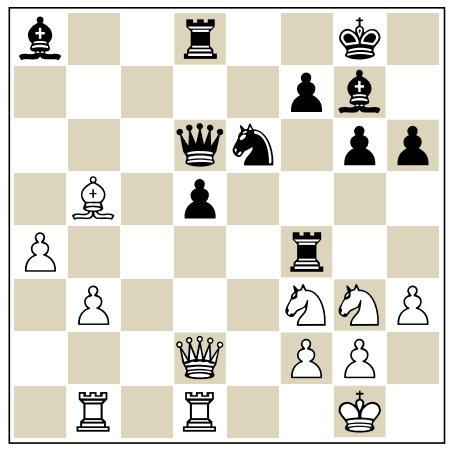
25.b3 ♗a8 26.♘f3 ♘c5 27.♖b1 ♘e6



At last the knight finds itself in a strong position, in view of the fact that it coordinates ideally with practically all of the other pieces.

28.♕d2 ♖b4 29.exd5 cxd5 30.♗b5 ♖d8 31.♖ed1 At this point Shirov was in severe time-trouble.

31...♖f4!



This switching of the rook to the kingside was prepared on the 24th move. The sacrifice on f3 is now threatened, and if the knight retreats Black can attack the f2 pawn.

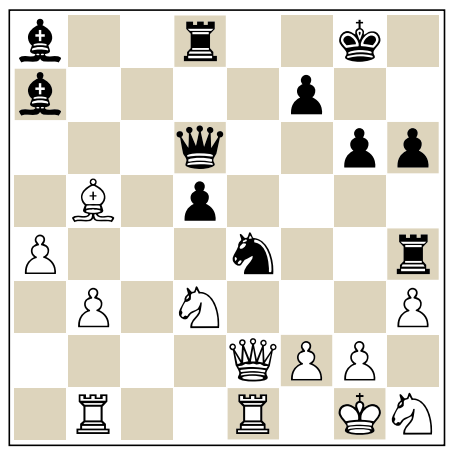
32.♘e1 ♗d4 33.♘h1

The only move. After 33.♘d3? ♖xf2! 34.♘xf2 ♕xg3 35.♕xd4 ♘xd4 36.♖xd4 ♖c8 Black's advantage is obvious.

33...♗a7!

One of my chess friends has never seen a rook at f4 and a bishop at a7 in the Breyer Variation, and I have to agree with him.

34.♘d3 ♖h4 35.♖e1 ♘g5 36.♕e2 ♘e4

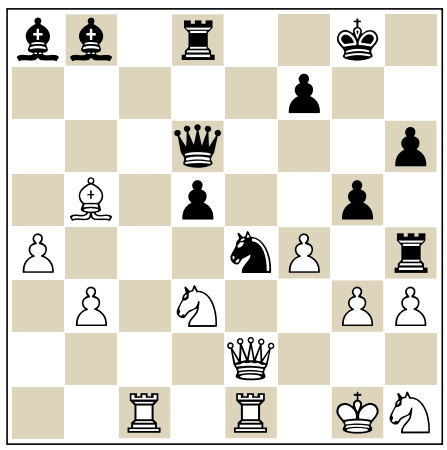


Black's threats are becoming increasingly dangerous.

37.♖bc1 ♗b8 38.f4 g5

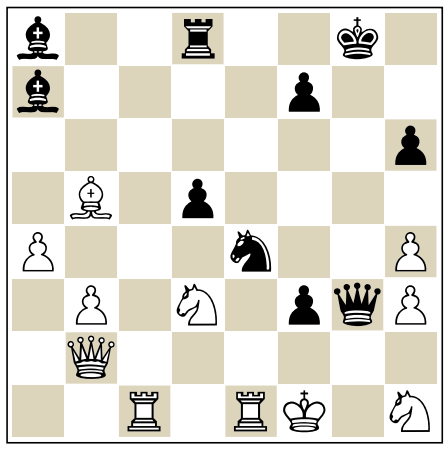
Although this is good enough, there was an easy win: 38...♖xf4! 39.♘xf4 ♕xf4 40.g3 ♘xg3 41.♘xg3 ♕xg3+ 42.♕g2 ♗a7+ 43.♔h1 d4 44.♗c6 ♗xc6 45.♖xc6 ♕xe1+.

39.g3



39...♖xh3? Up till this point Black had played very strongly, but here, unfortunately, I began playing on my opponent's time-trouble. And I made a terrible move, which throws away both a pretty finish and Black's entire advantage.

I could have won by 39...gxf4! 40.gxh4 (or 40.♘xf4 ♘xg3 and wins) 40...f3 41.♕b2 ♗a7+ 42.♔f1 ♕g3!!



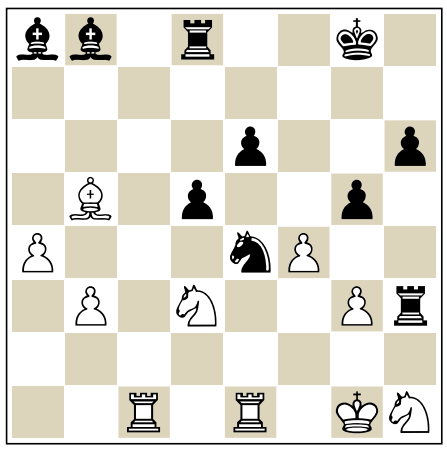
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

What a pity that I missed this, as moves such as 42...♕g3 are in the style of the Great Mikhail Tal.

40.♕g4!

I have to admit that I overlooked this move, and now I have to begin all over again. Moves other than 40...♕e6 worsen Black's position.

40...♕e6 41.♕xe6 fxe6



42.♗d7?

This merely aids the realization of my plan, and after this I did not throw away my advantage again! After 42.♗c6 ♗xc6 43.♖xc6 gxf4 44.♔g2 ♖h5 45.gxf4 ♔f7, despite it being an endgame Black has a strong attack.

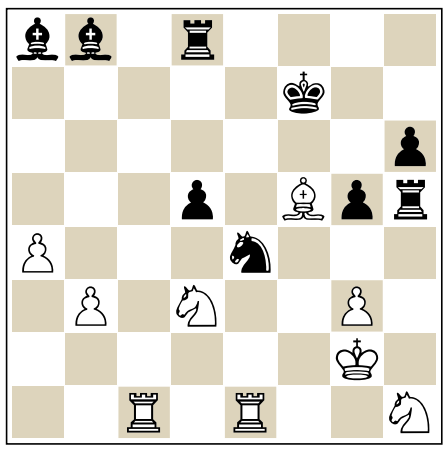
The correct continuation was 42.♔g2 ♖h5 43.♘hf2!, when White has good chances of equalizing.

42...♔f7 43.♔g2 ♖h5 44.f5 This is White's only practical chance. If 44.♗c6 ♗xc6 45.♖xc6 gxf4.

44...exf5

44...♖xd7 45.fxe6+ ♔xe6 46.♖c8 ♗d6 47.♖xa8 ♖c7 48.♖e2 would have led to a double-edged position.

45.♗xf5



45...♘f6!

This move not only defends my king, but also attacks the opponent's and prevents the bishop manoeuvre from f5 to g4-f3.

46.♘hf2 d4+ 47.♔g1

If 47.♘e4 g4.

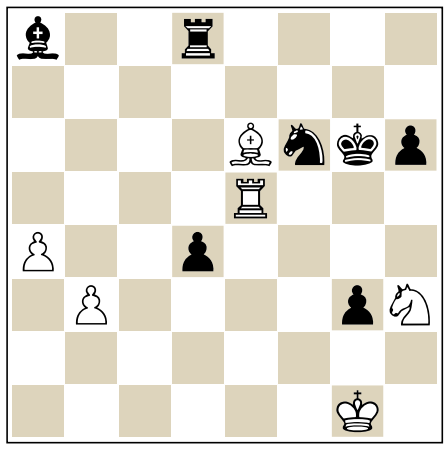
47...♗xg3

Black has activated his pieces and he now has a decisive advantage!

48.♘e5+ ♗xe5 49.♖xe5 g4!

This move is the most accurate and the quickest way to win.

50.♗e6+ ♔g6 51.♖cc5 g3 52.♘h3 ♖xe5 53.♖xe5

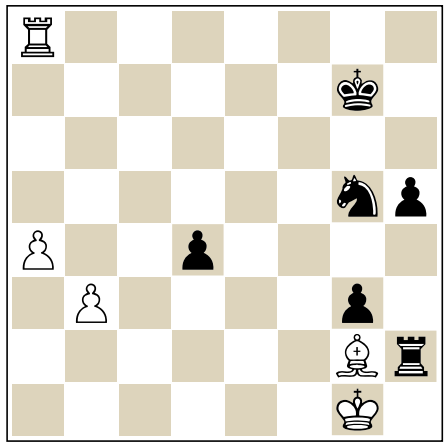


53...♘e4!

Despite Black's material advantage, I have to play accurately, in order to avoid an interesting trap by White. E.g., in the event of 53...d3 54.♘f4+ ♔g7 55.♗c4 d2?? (55...♘e4 56.♗xd3=) there is 56.♖e7+ ♔h8 57.♘g6 mate.

54.♗g4 ♖f8 55.♖e6+ ♔g7 56.♖e7+ ♔h8 57.♗e2 White resists desperately, but he is unable to halt the advance of the black pawns.

57...♘d2 58.♘f4 ♖xf4 59.♖e8+ ♔g7 60.♖xa8 ♖f2 61.♗h5 ♖h2 62.♗d1 ♘e4 63.♗f3 ♘g5 64.♗g2 h5 There is now a forced win.



65.♖d8 ♘e6 66.♖d7+ ♔f6 67.a5 ♘f4 68.♗f1 d3 69.♖d6+ ♔e5 70.♖d8 g2 71.♖e8+ ♔d6

White resigned.

I conducted this game quite well, with the exception of the 39th move ♖xh3.

Levon '*Slowhand*' Aronian Blitz World Champion

Fully concentrated Levon Aronian executed his moves almost slowly, but with such a steady rhythm that he played more quickly than the onlookers imagined.

NEW IN CHESS

The traditional dessert of the Tal Memorial was the World Blitz Championship. A Grand Dessert, to everyone's taste with most of the fastest players present. Carlsen, Grischuk and Nakamura were the hot favourites, but Levon Aronian decided the race in his favour well before the end. The Armenian could even lose his last two games.

He had said it before and he repeated it after the prize-giving. Much as he had enjoyed both events, Ilya Levitov, the acting head of the Russian Chess Federation, believes that next year it will be better to separate the World Blitz Championship from the Tal Memorial. There are various good reasons to do so. To begin with, having two such fantastic events one after the other hardly makes sense if both are attractive enough to draw wide attention on their own. Next, chances are not equal for the participants in the blitz who have just played Tal and those who arrive fresh for the blitz. As Vladimir Kramnik commented: 'I felt like an injured player. I tried but I felt that physically I could not stand this. Normally I would compete for one of the top places, and at some point I was even leading, but in the end I was happy that it was over because I was making so many mistakes.'

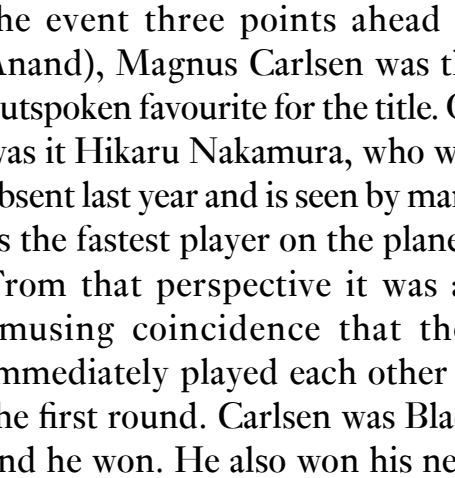
And then there's the selection of players for the blitz tournament. If it's an official world championship, it doesn't seem fair to give all participants in the Tal Memorial free entry to the championship (only Shirov and Wang Hao declined to play).

But that's for next year. This year the field of 20 players (two less than last year) was composed of eight players from the Tal Memorial, qualifiers from the blitz tournament after the Aeroflot Open and wildcards. The rate of play was three minutes plus two seconds per move. The absent favourites were World Champion Vishy Anand, who felt the event didn't fit into his schedule, and two-time Blitz World Champion

Vasily Ivanchuk, who had already committed himself to a rapid tournament in Mexico.

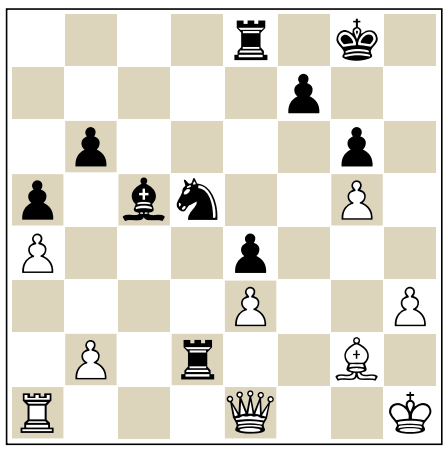
With his stunning performance of last year in mind (an unbelievable +20 in 42 rounds and winning the event three points ahead of Anand), Magnus Carlsen was the outspoken favourite for the title. Or was it Hikaru Nakamura, who was absent last year and is seen by many as the fastest player on the planet? From that perspective it was an amusing coincidence that they immediately played each other in the first round. Carlsen was Black and he won. He also won his next three games (including a win over Kramnik), while Nakamura was struggling in the early rounds, losing three from his four first games.

The game that many were looking forward to was the Round-10 encounter between Nakamura and former Blitz World Champion Alexander Grischuk. In his disappointment after the last round of the Tal Memorial, where he let Grischuk off the hook, Nakamura had publicly vowed to his Twitter followers that he was 'going to destroy Grischuk like a baby in blitz'. Nakamura appeared at the board with a grim and determined look, only to find that the baby had lots of teeth.



Nakamura-Grischuk
position after 26.♕h4

Grischuk has emerged comfortably from the opening and it is clear that Black has the initiative. He can now continue solidly (and strongly) with 26...♘d5, but the Russian wanted to continue like a man. **26...♕xd2!? 27.♖xd2 ♖xd2 28.♔h1 ♘d5 29.♕e1** Perhaps he should have eliminated the black e-pawn with 29.♗xe4 but 29...♘xe3 30.♕f4 ♖d4 31.♕xe3 ♖xa4 32.♕e1 ♖axe4 is no picnic either.



29...♖xg2! Continuing in great style. **30.♔xg2 ♘xe3+ 31.♔g3 ♘c2** Suddenly the e-pawn is a monster. **32.♕e2** It's understandable that he wasn't attracted to 32.♕d1 ♘xa1 33.♕xa1 e3 34.♕e1 e2 35.♔f3, and soon he'll have to give the queen for the pawn. **32...♘xa1 33.h4 ♘b3 34.h5 ♘d4 35.♕c4 ♘f5+ 36.♔h3 ♔g7 37.h6+ ♔g8 38.♕c3 e3** White resigned.

NEW IN CHESS

Hoping to 'destroy' Alexander Grischuk 'like a baby', Hikaru Nakamura sits ready with a grim and determined look.

Despite his abysmal start, Nakamura didn't knuckle under and with great resilience and determination he managed to share fourth place with Boris Gelfand, who was having a good time demonstrating that at his age you still can be an outstanding blitz player.

After his impetuous start Carlsen couldn't hold the pace either. He felt that 'his head was not working' and in all he lost 10 games, finishing in third place, half a point behind Teimour Radjabov, who blitzed himself to the front on the final day.

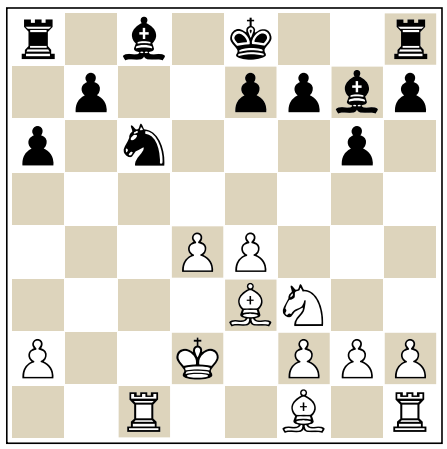
And they all had to bow to Levon Aronian, who moved into the lead on the second day with seven straight wins and added enough points on the final day to clinch the title with one round to go. Watching Aronian you rarely got the feeling that he was partaking in a blitz tournament. Fully concentrated he executed his moves almost slowly, but with such a steady rhythm that he played more quickly than the onlookers imagined. To a question about his slow play he replied: 'I was always pretty slow. But in my

chess, and also in my blitz games, I try to emulate Ivanchuk's approach. His concentration. I really like the way he plays, this deep kind of chess.'

When asked which of his blitz games he liked best, Aronian quickly went through the 38 games that he played and decided to show his two wins against Ian Nepomniachtchi. For two reasons. Firstly because he thought they were good games, and secondly because he had had a training session (which also included playing basketball and relaxation) with a couple of players close to Moscow, in a small place called Zvenygorod. One of those other players was Nepomniachtchi. 'The reason I want to show these two games is that we played numerous games during this training session. On the first day I managed to upset him a lot and on the second day I think it was a draw in our match. So he was looking forward to have his revenge in the tournament.'

GI 4.9 – D85
Levon Aronian
Ian Nepomniachtchi
Moscow World Blitz 2010 (13)

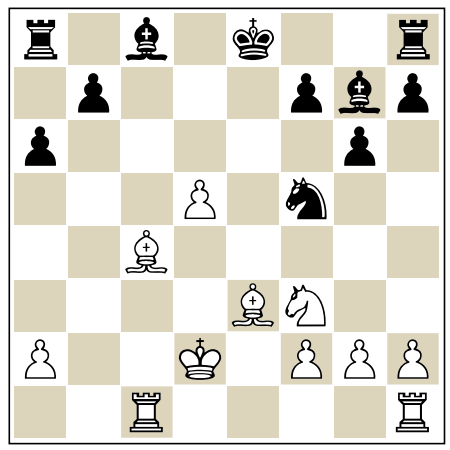
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♗e3 c5 8.♘f3 ♕a5 9.♕d2 ♘c6 10.♖b1 During the week that we spent together with various friends we also looked at some Grünfeld. Probably Ian hadn't expected me to go for the line that I had played in a recent blitz game.
10...a6 This is not regarded as a great move. **11.♖c1 cxd4 12.cxd4 ♕xd2+ 13.♔xd2**



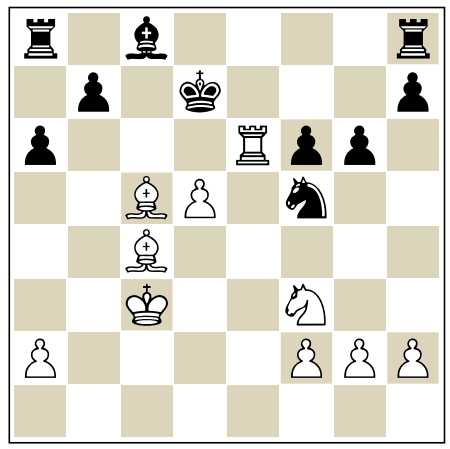
NEW IN CHESS

At the improvised prize-giving Levon Aronian got a medal for his shared win in the Tal Memorial, and a cup for winning the Blitz World Championship.

13...e6 This doesn't look like a bad move, but my 17th move questions its merits.
14.d5 exd5 15.exd5 ♘e7
This still looks normal, especially in a blitz game.
16.♗c4 ♘f5
And here I had this idea. Of course, I could play something else, but I thought that the following exchange sacrifice was really interesting. During the game I felt that it was totally winning.



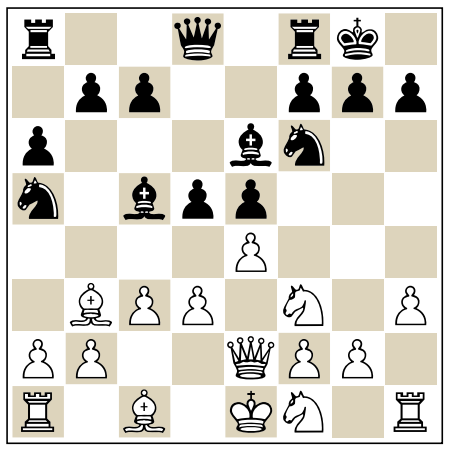
17.♗c5 ♗h6+ 18.♔c3 ♗xc1 19.♖xc1 f6
This is losing. He should have gone for something else, even though the sacrifice really looks strong. It's really nice how White's pieces work together.
20.♖e1+ ♔d7 21.♖e6



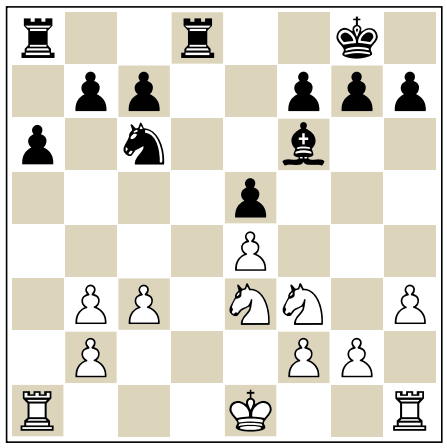
I'm just grabbing everything.
21...b5 22.♗b3 Black is completely lost. I want to take on f6, want to play g4, there is nothing he can do.
22...a5 23.g4 b4+ 24.♔d2 ♘h6 25.♗a4+ ♔c7 26.♖e7+ ♔d8 27.d6 ♖a6 28.♗b5 ♘xg4
Black resigned, hoping to have his revenge in the next game.

IG 2.10 – C54
Ian Nepomniachtchi
Levon Aronian
Moscow World Blitz 2010 (32)

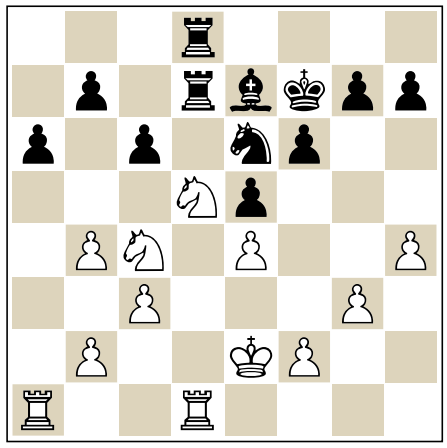
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.h3 a6 7.♘bd2
We also played two games with this line in Zvenygorod.
7...0-0 8.♗b3 ♗e6 9.♘f1 d5 10.♕e2 ♘a5



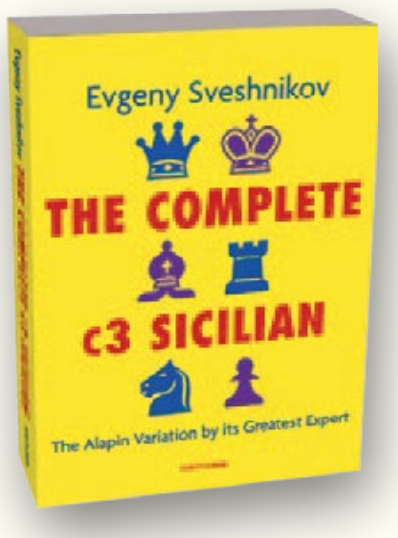
11.♗c2
After I had played 10...♘a5 I got scared during the game, thinking that 11.♗xd5 might be problematic: 11...♗xd5 12.exd5 ♘xd5, and now, after 13.b4, c3 is hanging. But then I saw that instead of 12.exd5, 12.b4 might be not that clear. But Ian made me quite happy by playing 11.♗c2.
11...dxe4 12.dxe4 ♗c4 13.♕d2 ♘c6
Of course I can move my queen somewhere and it's not easy for White to develop, but I wanted to play it safe. I expected him to look for complicated positions to try and get his revenge.
14.♕xd8 14.♘e3 is probably stronger. **14...♖fxd8 15.♗g5 ♗e7 16.♘e3 ♗e6 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.♗b3 ♗xb3 19.axb3**



19...♗e7
I thought that maybe I was slightly worse, but it has to be a draw, which I was happy with given the tournament situation.
20.b4 f6 21.♔e2 ♔f7 22.♘d2
Here I expected him to put one knight on b3 and the other one on c4.
22...♖ab8
In order not to run into 23.b5 after 22...♖d7, which is my general idea, to transfer the knight to e6 via d8, where especially in blitz it would be a very dangerous animal. It can give check on f4 or jump to g5.
23.♘d5 ♖d7 24.♘c4 ♘d8 25.♖hd1 ♘e6 26.g3 ♖bd8 27.h4 c6



Now he can just take on e7 and make a draw. But one of the main components of my success was that, before playing me, my opponents had met Boris (Gelfand), who was in great form and beating everybody. That was really depressing for them, because they were playing blitz against someone who is about twice their age and they don't know who he really is. And after he had beaten them up they came to me very eager to beat me!
28.♘de3 ♖xd1 29.♘xd1
And now in his fighting mood he blunders. After exchanging rooks it's just equal.



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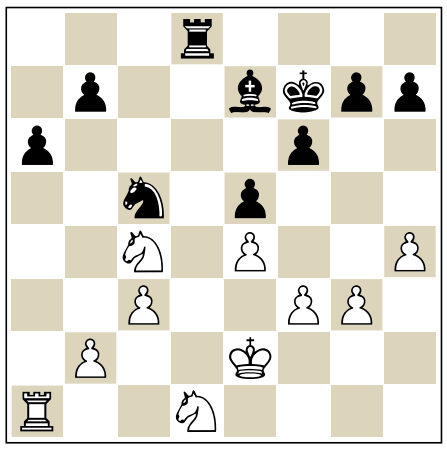
29...c5 Here I could have taken on b4, as 29...♗xb4 30.cxb4 ♘d4+ 31.♔f1 ♘b3 32.♖b1 b5 is obviously very good for me, but I didn't see this. But 29...c5 is good enough. Here he became very nervous.

30.bxc5

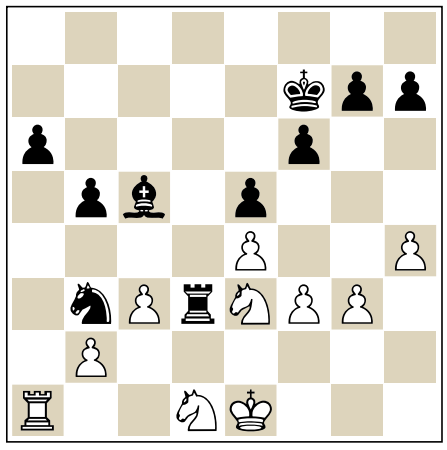
Maybe 30.♘a5 was stronger.

30...♘xc5 31.f3

This is the last mistake. He should still have played 31.♘a5. The text looks OK and it seems he will play ♘d5 and be fine. But unfortunately for him there is:



31...♘b3 32.♖b1 b5 Now my rook will penetrate and all his strategical hopes are dashed by a simple tactic. **33.♘ce3 ♖d2+ 34.♔e1 ♗c5 35.♖a1 ♖d3**



My pieces enter and he is completely lost. **36.♖xa6 ♗xe3 37.♔e2 ♘c1+ 38.♔e1 ♗d2+ 39.♔f1 ♖xf3+ 40.♔g2 ♖d3 41.♖b6 ♗e1** White resigned.

At the prize-giving the players were all smiles, including the favourites that might have expected more from this blitz feast. Also Carlsen and Nakamura? Yes, also Carlsen and Nakamura. And while most of the other players disappeared into town, they had their own idea of unwinding. At 10 p.m. they gathered for another blitz marathon (40 games, 3 minutes, 2 seconds per move) that lasted till half past four in the morning! Carlsen mentioned it in his blog and Nakamura dedicated a tweet to the news, but neither mentioned the result. Well, in case you wonder, Carlsen won 24½–15½.

Moscow World Blitz 2010

1	Aronian	ARM	2801	24½
2	Radjabov	AZE	2744	24
3	Carlsen	NOR	2802	23½
4	Gelfand	ISR	2741	21½
5	Nakamura	USA	2741	21½
6	Karjakin	RUS	2760	20½
7	Kramnik	RUS	2791	20½
8	Mamedyarov	AZE	2763	19½
9	Svidler	RUS	2722	19½
10	Eljanov	UKR	2742	19
11	Grischuk	RUS	2771	19
12	Mamedov	AZE	2660	18
13	Nepomniachtchi	RUS	2720	18
14	Vachier-Lagrave	FRA	2703	18
15	Movsesian	SVK	2721	17½
16	Andreikin	RUS	2683	17½
17	Grachev	RUS	2654	16½
18	Savchenko	RUS	2632	15½
19	Caruana	ITA	2709	13½
20	Ponomariov	UKR	2744	12½

20 players, 38 rounds

NEW IN CHESS

Blitzing in the Ritz. After 38 rounds spread over 3 days, Hikaru Nakamura and Magnus Carlsen happily played another 40 games in a nightly marathon.

‘THE MAIN THING IS HAPPINESS’

Genna Sosonko

When the deputy head of the Soviet Sport Committee, Viktor Ivonin, who was in charge of chess, was reporting ‘to the top’ about Petrosian’s defeat in his match against Fischer, one of the reasons he gave was the presence of a huge Armenian colony in Buenos Aires that had distracted the Soviet grandmaster from his play. The main reason for his crushing defeat by the American (6½-2½) was something else, of course, but it was certainly a fact that wherever Petrosian played the attention of his compatriots was riveted on him. At the tournament in Lone Pine quite a few Armenians who lived in California came to see him, and in other countries I always saw Petrosian’s fellow countrymen coming to try and talk to their idol, or just to shake his hand.

When the Soviet team arrived in Buenos Aires in 1954, hundreds of people met them at the airport, chanting – ‘Petrosian! Petrosian!’ In Montevideo, Uruguay, local Armenians gave a dinner in their club named after Marshal Bagramyan, a hero of the Second World War. The dinner was given in honour of the Soviet team, but the star guest was Tigran Petrosian.

But no matter how popular Petrosian was abroad, nothing could compare with the attention he got at home. When he came to Yerevan it was a national event. Receptions with the city fathers, television appearances, requests for interviews, gifts and tributes, banquets and parties, delegations from the remotest corners of the republic.

A luxury suite was always reserved for Petrosian in the best hotel, the Armenia. Mark Taimanov recalls how at breakfast the doors of the restaurant flew open and a colourful group of old men in national costumes slowly paraded to Petrosian’s table. Bowing, they deferentially addressed Petrosian in Armenian. After the delegation had left, Tigran explained: ‘Those were elders from a small mountain village. They came to find out how many checks you have to give for perpetual check, how many queens you can have on the board, and whether a player whose king has reached the eighth rank gets an extra pawn.’

Who other than Tigran Petrosian could give the answers to these difficult questions? But it wasn’t just about the questions: this was an act of admiration and love for their compatriot, who had become the best in the world in his field.

Yerevan 1962. The opera house, where a famous tenor is performing the role of Canio in Leoncavallo’s *Pagliacci*. The hall is full. The conductor comes out to the applause of the crowd, the lights go down, music is heard. The overture has been played, the curtain has risen. But suddenly the orchestra falls silent at a wave from the conductor’s baton and all the chandeliers in the hall light up. What’s happened? Petrosian and his wife appear at the door. Mark Taimanov was also at that show: ‘The whole audience leapt from their seats and burst into an ovation, and it was only after Tigran had been ceremonially accompanied to his box that the conductor gave a signal to the orchestra and the performance started up again.’

During Petrosian’s World Championship matches – with Botvinnik and twice with Spassky (1963-69), the Estrada Theatre in Moscow was full of hundreds of Armenians, not only those who lived in the capital, but also people who had come from further away.

When they arrived in Moscow, going to see their idol was the first thing they did, although many had a very vague idea about chess. The most excited ones scattered rose petals in front of him and soil that they had brought from Echmiadzin – the ancient religious centre of Armenia.

Harry Golombek, the assistant arbiter, wrote that during one of the games a deafening applause broke out after Petrosian’s move, and a group of Armenians rushed to the stage. Employees blocked their way, but an elderly man managed to break through anyway and grab Petrosian’s hand. You could always see a large number of Armenian fans in front of the entrance to the theatre, eagerly awaiting news about the course of the battle, and a huge demonstration board was put up in the centre of Yerevan. At that time Petrosian received a telegram from Armenian football fans: ‘We don’t mind [our team] Ararat losing, as long as you win!’

After defeating Botvinnik and becoming world champion, Petrosian, extracting the mask of a simple bloke from his rich imitative repertoire, usually

Tigran Petrosian relaxes at his dacha with his wife Rona and his son Vartan.

told an Armenian parable about Tsar Nazar: Nazar was weak and timid, and not a shining intellect, but despite all that, he became the tsar. Then he invited his loser friends to his palace and hosted them luxuriously. When they started trying to find out how he'd managed to surpass them all, Nazar replied, 'The main thing is happiness.'

Petrosian received 2,000 roubles for his victory over Botvinnik – peanuts in comparison with the prizes for World Championship matches today, but a decent amount in those days by the standards of the Soviet Union, where the average salary was about 100 roubles a month. But his biggest gift came from his compatriots. At the closing ceremony of the match itself they presented the new world champion with the keys to a Volga car. Petrosian's Georgian admirers also considered Tigran one of their own, as he was born in Tbilisi and achieved his first successes in Georgia. 'That kind of present we can't do,' they admitted, and gave Petrosian a classic canvas of Armenian painting by Martiros Saryan. 'Now this picture is worth more than any Mercedes,' says Misha, Tigran Vartanovich's oldest son, half a century later.

'When Petrosian was playing his first match with Spassky (1966), we went home together after a couple of games – we were going the same way,' Yakov Neishtadt recalls. 'Every time we were followed at a respectful distance by a crowd of Armenians. Once we went up to a newspaper kiosk – unlike Botvinnik, who never read the press during competitions, Petrosian loved to look at what they were writing about him in the papers. Tigran had already walked away from the kiosk, but I stayed there for a moment, glancing at the cover of some magazine. "What? What did he say?" a young man exclaimed excitedly, separating from the crowd that had accompanied us. When he returned from Yerevan after winning the title of world champion, Petrosian said, "You realize, I could be a tsar there – you can imagine: in the villages they kiss my hand..."'

Of course, this attitude couldn't leave him indifferent. But although Petrosian said more than once that he did everything to make his fellow countrymen happy, he didn't react to the hypertrophied signs of attention without irony.

His own story about returning to Moscow after a few days in Yerevan he told to Neishtadt: 'Early morning. A cavalcade of four or five cars. Each of them is full of presents. I'm in the first car with the second secretary of the Central Committee. Suddenly he asks, "Are you taking some lamb with you?" I – "Lamb? No, lamb, no." The secretary – "You can't go without lamb. And don't refuse." He gives a signal, all the cars turn off the road. It's early, the market has only just opened, but there are already customers. The doors fly open instantly, and the managers of the market spill out and greet their dear guests. The meat pavilion. The secretary himself chooses a carcass and orders the best piece to be cut off. The queue, which has been pushed back by the important guests, forms again closer to the counter. Behind me I hear someone say, "Can't you cut something off the same piece for me?" "I'll cut you some of the same piece," the vendor replies, "when you get good at chess."'

* * *

At the age of 16 Tigran moved from Tbilisi to Yerevan and lived there for almost four years. An Armenian coming to Armenia from Tbilisi? He's ours, our Tigran, of course, but still. Still... It isn't easy to explain this: the ways of the East are mysterious, as we know.

Petrosian began his second World Championship match with Spassky in 1969 with a win. But then he started going into a tailspin, the score became equal, and after the 17th game the challenger came out ahead and wasn't giving up his lead any more. It was then that the 'Armenian radio' (a popular type of joke in Soviet times – hiding behind this fictional radio station people vented criticism on everyday life in their country – ed.) began to speak about the world champion's play with descending admiration: 'The brilliant Armenian chess player, grandmaster Tigran Petrosian...', 'The talented Soviet grandmaster T. Petrosian...', 'The graduate of the Tbilisi chess school Petrosian...'

Wherever Tigran Petrosian played Armenians would come to cheer him on in and outside the playing hall.

When Petrosian was accused of playing defensively, he associated this with the history of his country.

But that was just a joke, of course: even after losing the match to Spassky every visit to Yerevan by Petrosian was still an event. It was clear that a man was visiting who had become one of the symbols of the small nation, two-thirds of whom lived outside the borders of Armenia. It was typical that when Petrosian was accused of playing defensively, above all trying not to lose, he associated this with the difficult, very bloody events in the history of his country, replying that safety was an Armenian national trait.

* * *

Remembering his youth in Tbilisi, I once asked him: 'Do you speak Georgian, Tigran Vartanovich?' 'Not all that much, but I can explain myself with a girl,' was his surprising reply.

Perhaps when he was young Petrosian did make some mistakes in his Russian, but when I got to know him better he spoke absolutely correctly. So the joke that I heard from Kortchnoi: 'I calls you, you wasn't home – as Petrosian would have said,' didn't fully correspond with reality.

Petrosian played in Yugoslavia dozens of times, a chess paradise back then, and he read Serbo-Croat fluently and spoke it decently, like almost all Soviet grandmasters.

His English consisted of several everyday expressions and words, just like his German and Spanish, but – a capable person, guessing what was being talked about, he used them skilfully.

'Mucho, mucho trabajo,' Petrosian repeated after his game with Fernandez at the tournament in Las Palmas in 1980, explaining to the Spaniard what significant technical difficulties he would have had to overcome if the latter had played differently. But he immediately agreed with his vanquished opponent that his, Petrosian's, 'posición' remained 'mejor, mucho mejor'.

Although Petrosian had a flat in Moscow, he spent most of his time at his dacha in the suburb of Razdory, where he was visited by Armenians who lived in Moscow or who were visiting from Armenia. His closest friend was the composer Arno Babadjanian. During his World Championship matches Babadjanian, smoking nervously, walked around the theatre in circles, inquiring from time to time about how Tigran was doing. As it was the composer didn't bring Petrosian much luck, as he often lost when his friend found time to come and watch him.

They were both excitable people and they often squabbled over a game of backgammon, which Petrosian was keen on. The score was roughly equal, but each insisted that he was the stronger player. Sometimes, to break a run of bad luck, Petrosian rolled the dice from under his knee. Undoubtedly he had seen this when he was still a boy in Tbilisi and brought both that backward swing and his passion for food into his later life. He loved kebabs and Armenian cheeses. But he also adored Georgian dishes: lobio and satsivi. His wife learnt to cook these wonderfully.

* * *

A joke went around Moscow when Petrosian was playing his match with Botvinnik: what's more important for winning the top title in chess – being a Jew married to an Armenian (Gayane Davidovna Botvinnik, née Ananova), or an Armenian married to a Jew (Rona Yakovlevna Petrosian, née Avinezer). Two decades later Garry Kimovich Kasparov put an end to the argument, finding a winning combination in his own person. And today Levon Aronian confirms the success of the mix.

Petrosian himself responded to these kinds of jokes with his characteristic humour. In the early '80s, when Kasparov's star was already rising, he held a training session at his own dacha with Iosif Dorfman and Alexander Beliavsky. 'Once Vartan, Petrosian's youngest son, came into the room where we were working, and started having a lively discussion about something with his father,' Dorfman recalls. 'When

the door was closed behind him, Tigran Vartanovich shook his head, "Oh yes, the Armenian-Jewish combination doesn't always produce a genius..."'

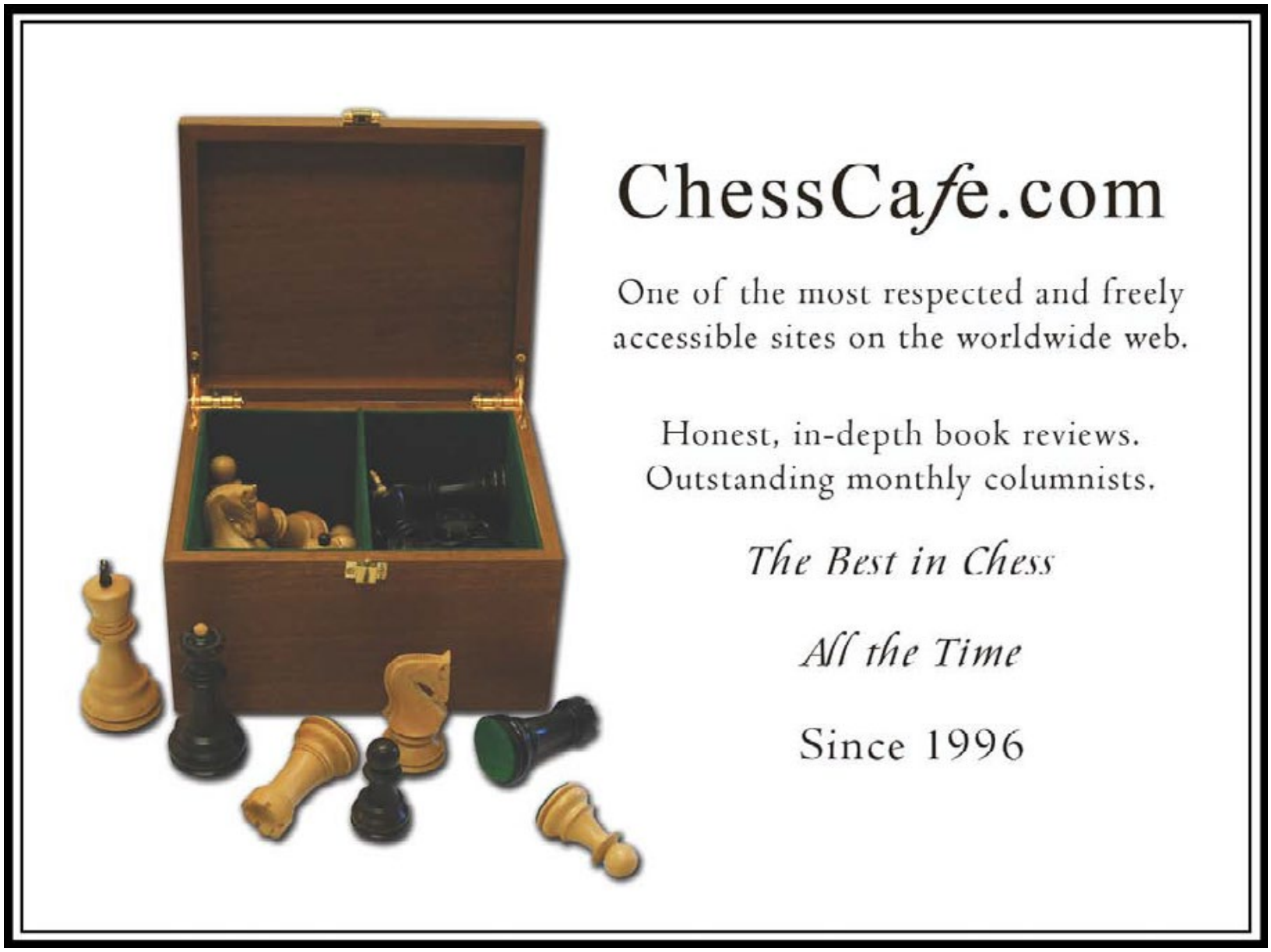
After the Winter Olympics in Moscow in 1964 a big government reception was held. The world chess champion was among the invited guests. The secretary of the Italian Communist Party, Luigi Longo, who was on a visit to the Soviet Union, wanted to meet Petrosian and turned to Khrushchev. Khrushchev reacted to the Italian's request simply: he asked Mikoyan [1] – also an Armenian – to introduce Longo to the famous chess player. When they had begun a conversation Khrushchev came up to them: 'Ah, you're that Petrosian. Listen, why's your compatriot going all over Moscow with a boom-boom to people's heads?'

A certain Ionesian, an Armenian, one of the first serial killers in the Soviet Union, posing as a representative of Mosgaz, the Moscow gas company, had killed those who opened their doors to him and robbed their flats, and unimaginable rumours were flying around Moscow. History is silent on what Petrosian said in reply to the leader of the Soviet Union, but we can imagine how pleasant it was for him to hear Khrushchev's joke.

Rona Petrosian recalls: 'I don't remember exactly when this was, but once when we were at Mikoyan's there was a discussion about Kotov's newly-published book on Alekhine. In glorifying Alekhine Kotov was very free with the facts, and Tigran remarked to Mikoyan that no one doubted Alekhine's genius as a chess player, but that he was an émigré who had betrayed his country, and that Alekhine's human qualities were extremely far from ideal. And that for him, Petrosian, it was simply unpleasant to read this book, in which the truth only made a fleeting appearance. Mikoyan interrupted him sharply: "Listen to me carefully, Tigran – don't tell anyone what you just said to me. And be sure to mark my words – this is their country. You understand? This is their country."'

The country in which Tigran Petrosian lived his entire life ceased to exist in 1991. How would Petrosian have felt if he'd managed to live until today? Obviously he wouldn't have had any everyday problems, that isn't what I'm talking about. But how would his fate have turned out, how would he have reacted to the freedom that turned out to be both better and worse than people had thought?

[1] Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan (1895-1978) – the chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.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Would he have started giving his lectures in the Moscow club that now bears his name? These were lessons of the highest class, teaching the most difficult thing in chess: how to think. To think about why you're making this or that move. From these published lectures even today you can follow the workings of the thought processes of a chess player in whose games you can learn what you can't learn from anyone else.

Tigran Petrosian at the peek of his career. In 1963 he defeated Mikhail Botvinnik to become the ninth World Champion.

Or perhaps he would have been a chess patron? Would he have been a frequent guest in independent Armenia, one of the strongest chess countries in the world today? Would he have moved there permanently, spending his last years in a halo of admiration and glory? Or would he have travelled around the towns and villages in the capacity of an 'ambassador', as Spassky does? Would he have started writing down his reminiscences? What would his memoirs be like? Would they only have touched on the facade of the huge building of Soviet chess, like Averbakh's, trying to avoid all the sharp corners? Would he have veered off into a cheerful invented narrative, like Taimanov? Would he have been like the uncompromising spirit fighter Bronstein, offended by the whole chess world? Or, like the furious Kortchnoi, would he have distributed slaps in the face to everyone who, in his opinion, deserved them?

What would he, who in the seventies of the last century called the new generation the 'children of Chess Informant', have called the young players today: 'friends of Fritzes'?, 'Rybka food'?

Would he have stayed in chess at all? Or, like a retired Roman emperor, would he have taken up cabbage-growing, living permanently at his lovely dacha? He did say: 'If they'd pay me the same salary, I'd give up chess and become a gardener.' Shutting himself off from the world, would he start doing what, by his own admission, he loved most of all: pottering about in his garden every day, sitting in the sunshine, growing flowers?

We can't know that. Tigran Vartanovich Petrosian died on August 13, 1984, eight months after he had been harshly diagnosed. As was normal in those days in the Soviet Union, he was told it was kidney stones, and they operated three times on inoperable cancer.

* * *

Six months before he died he played in the Interpolis tournament in Holland and often took walks on the streets of Tilburg, talking about this and that. He particularly liked these walks when he'd beaten me on the latest occasion, and the tension of the anticipation of a forthcoming game that always accompanied this kind of socializing was dormant. Once he talked about euthanasia, which even then was a topic of wide discussion in Holland.

'In the West you prepare for death because a man has something to lose,' Petrosian argued. 'That's why everything is discussed openly, and wills are written, so that a man of means can put his affairs in order. But in our country – what kind of wills can there be, if a man has nothing? What are you going to leave anyone? No, this isn't just about a different attitude towards death, and the problems of pain and suffering are irrelevant here,' was the strictly pragmatic explanation of the problem that Petrosian gave.

'It's no good, Genna,' he said another time, 'recently my neighbour's dog bit me at my dacha. It's a bad sign – a dog won't bite a healthy person.' 'What are you saying, Tigran Vartanovich, what's some dog got to do with anything?' 'It wasn't some dog, it was the neighbour's. A dog that knew me well. No, a dog won't bite a healthy person, especially not someone it knows.' And he shook his head.

He was buried in the Armenian cemetery in Moscow. At the last minute they decided to put a chess set into the coffin. The idea came up spontaneously, no one had one handy, and they found the first set they could get hold of. On the third day the grave was opened and the chess set disappeared from the grave: the thieves had thought that the pieces were made of gold.

Kramnik finishes first in final stage of Grand Slam Final

Statistically, it was the strongest four-player tournament ever held, and Vladimir Kramnik had entered it through the back door. After winning a blitz tie-break against Levon Aronian in Shanghai, the Russian qualified for the second stage of the 2010 Masters Final in Bilbao, where he emerged as the glorious winner one month later. 'Even before coming here I told my wife that I felt I was in good shape', the winner told **Peter Doggers**.

This report can be considered a follow-up to our article (see New In Chess 2010/7) about the first stage of the Masters Final, held in Shanghai and won by Alexey Shirov. (That's what you get when a tournament is split in two parts, and played around an Olympiad. It makes it pretty hard for a chess magazine to cover it all in one issue!) So let's start where we left the tournament. You'll probably recall the thrilling blitz play-off in Shanghai between Levon Aronian and Vladimir Kramnik. The latter won in the Armageddon game, and thus gained the second qualification spot for Bilbao.

And so, exactly 30 days and a long Olympiad later, Shirov and Kramnik were the ones to join Viswanathan Anand and Magnus Carlsen in Bilbao. These four players were presented at the opening ceremony of the Grand Slam Masters Final in front of mostly Spanish journalists, sponsors and guests, with the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum as a backdrop.

As mentioned in the Shanghai report, Carlsen and Anand had been seeded directly for this 'final stage of the final', the Norwegian by winning all three Grand Slam tournaments he played in – Nanjing, Wijk aan Zee and Bazna – and the Indian for being the World Champion. The small group of four top players made the tournament a Category 22 event, statistically the strongest ever held in classical chess based on ratings.

As in the first two editions in Bilbao and in the first leg in Shanghai, the tournament had a set of special rules to encourage exciting chess. The players had just 90 minutes for their first 40 moves, followed by an hour to finish the game, with 10-second increments after move 40. Besides, for the standings the 'football score' (three points for a win, one for a draw) was used, as well as the Sofia rule to avoid short draws.

Generally speaking, the Sofia rule leads to relatively long games and even though Bilbao was his third tough tournament in a row, winner Vladimir Kramnik was quite positive about this rule: 'I think it's quite good. Actually you would not believe me, of course, but I can tell you – and my seconds can confirm it, I said it in 2000 in London – that actually it could be good. I understand that this sounds strange coming from me, but it is really true. I was

PETER DOGGERS

The four Grand Slam finalists with the Bilbao Gugenheim Museum as a backdrop: Vladimir Kramnik, Magnus Carlsen, Alexey Shirov and Vishy Anand.

PETER DOGGERS

After the games the players were interviewed by Spanish chess journalist Leontxo Garcia in the inner court of the Alhóndiga.

speaking with Joel (Lautier – ed.) after the match. We were discussing plans for chess and I told him it's actually very logical that you cannot offer a draw. In general I'm in favour of it, only it would be better if it wasn't called Sofia rule (laughs).'

This year, the Basque organizers said goodbye to the glass cube at the Plaza Nueva in the Old Town, and instead moved the tournament to the modern Bilbao city centre. Rumour had it that after his participation in the first event in 2008, Vishy Anand had stated that he didn't want to play in the *urna* anymore. But the organizers denied this and said that they simply preferred to 'do something different'. And different it was, except for one thing: the players did play behind glass again.

The venue was one of the most iconic buildings in Bilbao: the Alhóndiga, a former wine storehouse. Labelled as a 'culture and leisure centre', this multi-purpose building (43 thousand square metres) has been completely revamped and was opened to the public in stages between May and October this year. It contains a cinema, a fitness centre, a library, showrooms, an auditorium, shops, bars and a restaurant.

Entering the Alhóndiga felt like stepping into a time machine. From the outside the building had kept its early 20th-century design and feel (the wine storehouse was inaugurated in 1909), but from the inside everything was brand new and modern. The chess took place on the ground floor, a huge space lit by dimmed lights, with a concrete floor and dozens of pillars spread over the area, all differently designed.

On one side, in a small niche, a slightly cramped playing room was created, with just enough space for two tables with chess sets and one for the arbiter. In total it was about eight by five metres, and closed on one side by an improvised glass window. The playing conditions were reminiscent of the glass cube.

The Alhóndiga turned out to be perfectly suited for side events. For children there was the 'Euskaltel Game-gunea', a multimedia column with screens to play chess and other games. During five of the six rounds a blitz tournament for amateurs was held just about 10 metres from where the top players were pondering their moves. These tournaments were of decent strength – English grandmaster Stuart Conquest, who lives in Spain, played a few days in a row, but also, for example, Alexey Shirov's wife WIM Olga Dolgova and Magnus Carlsen's father Henrik and sister Ingrid could be seen behind the pieces.

A bit further away a stage was set up for commentary. Each day about a hundred visitors would sit down to enjoy the commentary by – who else? – Leontxo Garcia, Spain's most famous chess journalist and commentator. He was assisted by Bilbao's IM Santiago González de la Torre and chess historian Joaquin Pérez de Arriaga. A giant electronic screen was hanging in the air right above them, showing the actual positions of the games as well as video images of the playing hall, creating a professional setting altogether.

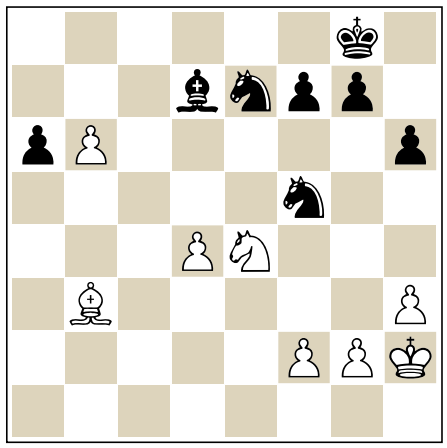
After each game the players would join the commentary team and explain their moves to the

audience – Anand and Shirov in fluent Spanish. Then they would usually answer a large number of questions not directly related to the game, coming from either Garcia or the audience. It's something top players are not asked to do at many elite events, but they seemed happy enough to be there and promote their sport. It also helped, of course, that the loser of a game was usually excused after a few minutes... Kramnik said about this: 'It's very nice to play in such a good atmosphere, with so many people interested in our game. This definitely gives you even more motivation. It gives you the feeling that your work is appreciated, and this is the most important feeling we can have.'

Kramnik laid the foundation for tournament victory as early as the first round. This game you can find further on with captivating notes by the winner. The Russian smoothly defeated Carlsen, and so, from hindsight, the game already showed the two most dominant story lines in Bilbao: Kramnik was doing well and Carlsen wasn't.

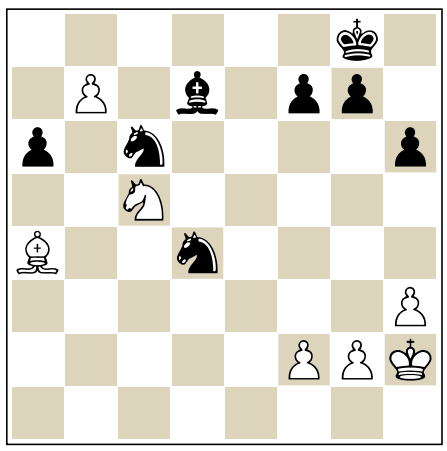
Since the Norwegian had lost three games in Khanty-Mansiysk just before Bilbao, Leontxo Garcia asked Carlsen after the first round on behalf of chess fans all over the world: 'Are you in a crisis?' Magnus responded: 'Of course my result in the Olympiad was not good, although I would not like to elaborate on that (with a smile). After all, before the Olympiad I won every tournament I played in in 2010, as well as my last tournament in 2009. Today he played very well, all respect to that, and I lost. That happens. I don't think you should draw conclusions after one game.'

And so people started to draw conclusions only the day *after*, when Carlsen lost yet again, this time with the white pieces against Vishy Anand. It meant the fifth loss in his last nine games, but quite remarkably, the G-Star fashion model remained relatively relaxed, and even joked at the press conference. Speaking about an error on move 33, Carlsen smiled at Anand (who was to speak after him) and said: 'By the way, sorry that I'm stealing your line here.'



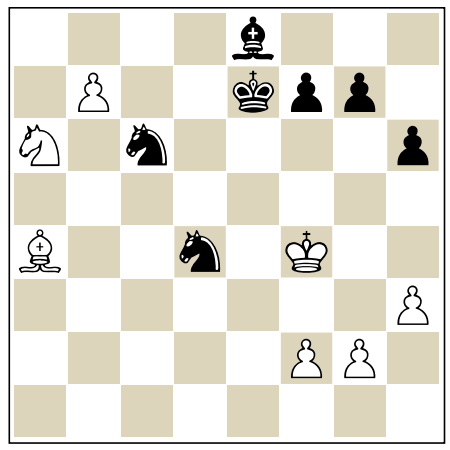
Carlsen-Anand
position after 32...♘3f5

33.♘c5?!
Carlsen thought that 'everything would be a draw', but this doesn't make life easier for White.
At the press conference Anand showed an impressive bit of calculation: 33.d5 ♗c8 34.g4 ♘d4 35.♘d6 ♗b7 36.♘xb7 ♘xb3 37.d6 ♘c6 38.d7 a5 39.d8♕+ ♘xd8 40.♘xd8 ♘c5 41.b7 ♘d7 42.♘c6 a4 43.♔g3 a3 44.♘b4 and it's a draw.
33...♘xd4 34.b7 ♘ec6 35.♗a4



35...♗e8!
A strong move. Carlsen had underestimated that after he wins back the piece, his knight on b8 is in danger of getting trapped.

36.♘xa6 ♔f8 37.♔g3 ♔e7 38.♔f4? The losing mistake. Necessary was 38.♗d1!.



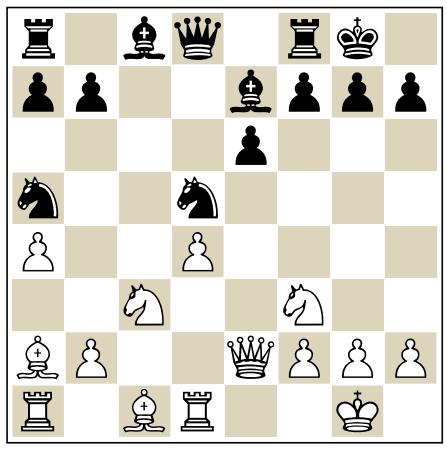
38...♘e6+!
Computers prefer 38...♘b8, but after 39.♘xb8 ♗xa4 40.♘d7 ♘c6 41.b8♕ ♘xb8 42.♘xb8 ♗b5 43.♔e5 f6+ 44.♔d5 ♗f1 45.g3 ♗g2+ 46.♔c5 ♗xh3 47.♘c6+ White can probably hold.
39.♔e3 ♘ed8 40.♗xc6 ♘xc6 41.h4
As Anand demonstrated to the fans after the game 41.b8♕ ♘xb8 42.♘xb8 ♗b5 43.♔d4 ♔d6 44.h4 ♗f1! (not 44...♔c7? 45.♔c5, and the knight escapes) followed by 45...♔c7 wins for Black.
41...♔d6 42.g4 ♗d7 43.g5 hxg5 44.hxg5 g6 45.f4 ♗e6
White resigned.
At the press conference Anand enjoyed explaining the way to win this: 'Black puts his pawns on white squares so that his bishop can protect them when his king is busy catching the knight, and the white king will attack his kingside.'

With this win Anand surpassed Carlsen on the live ratings list, but the Indian was the first to put this into perspective: 'He has had a spectacular year. What's most important is to peak at the Candidates' matches. (A remark that was outdated when this magazine went to print – ed.) It's not the moment to judge; everyone knows he will be World Champion one day. The only question is when.'

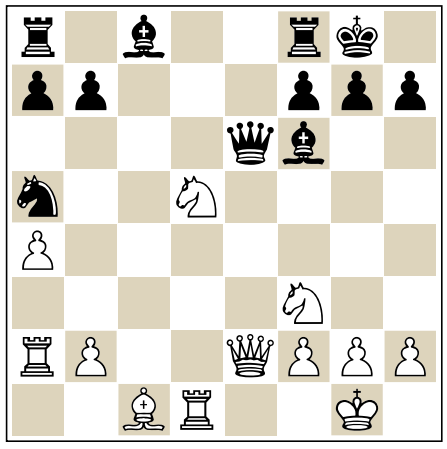
Kramnik won again, easily defeating Shirov, who made a mistake right after the opening.

SL 3.4 – D16
Vladimir Kramnik
Alexey Shirov
Bilbao 2010 (2)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 dxc4 5.a4 e6 6.e3 c5 7.♗xc4 ♘c6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♕e2 cxd4 10.♖d1 0-0 11.exd4 ♘d5 12.♗b3 ♘a5 13.♗a2



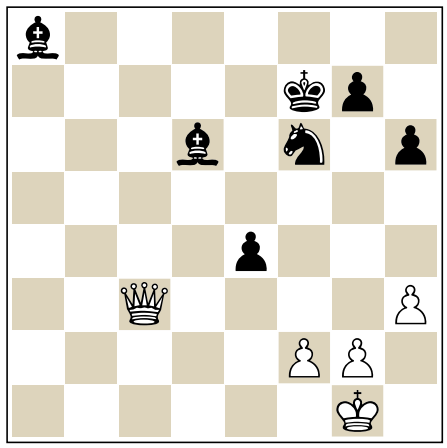
13...♘b4?!
After the game Shirov said he had missed White's 18th move.
14.d5! ♘xa2 15.♖xa2 ♗f6 16.dxe6 ♕e7
Better is 16...♕e8, e.g. 17.♘d5 ♗xe6 18.♘xf6+ gxf6 'and here I tried to make 19.♘d4 ♗xa2 20.♕g4+ ♔h8 21.♕h4 work, e.g. 21...♕d8 22.♖d3 threatening 23.♘f5, but maybe it's too much,' said Kramnik.
17.♘d5! ♕xe6



18.b4!
This refutes Black's idea.
18...♘c6
18...♘b3? 19.♗e3 traps the knight.
19.b5 ♘e5 20.♘c7 ♘xf3+ 21.gxf3 ♕xe2 22.♖xe2 ♗e6
22...♖b8 23.♗a3.
23.♘xa8 ♖xa8 24.♗b2
And because Black couldn't create counterplay, White won without problems.

In the third round Kramnik comfortably drew against Anand with the black pieces. There was an interesting story to this game, as at the press conference Kramnik revealed very deep preparation: 'Actually, I analysed it very deeply during the Olympiad in Khanty, because Grischuk was planning to play this line against Leko and I was free that day. He asked me to analyse it because he was not sure about this endgame. So I had a good sleepless night and I think I managed to analyse it move by move in every line, that's what I thought. Eventually he lost the game in another line, but at least it was useful for me today.'

Shirov-Carlsen also ended in a draw, but many hours later. The game saw an heroic endgame of queen versus three minor pieces:



Shirov-Carlsen
position after 41...♗xa8

The game lasted no fewer than 174 moves and three score-sheets, and finally came to an end thanks to the

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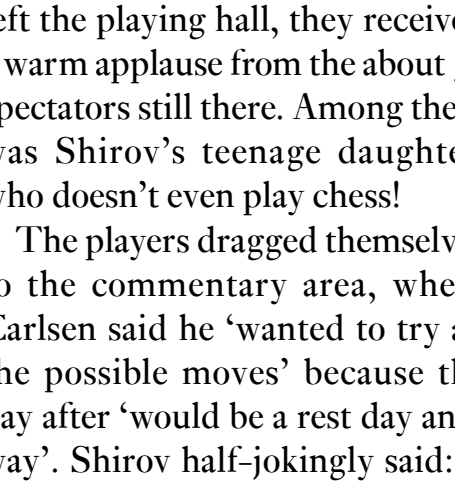
50-move rule. When the players left the playing hall, they received a warm applause from the about 50 spectators still there. Among them was Shirov's teenage daughter, who doesn't even play chess!

The players dragged themselves to the commentary area, where Carlsen said he 'wanted to try all the possible moves' because the day after 'would be a rest day anyway'. Shirov half-jokingly said: 'I can't remember anything except for the last 10 minutes or so!'

After the rest day the fourth round saw two draws as well. Especially the encounter between Anand and Shirov was very interesting.

FR 5.4 – C12
Vishy Anand
Alexey Shirov
Bilbao 2010 (4)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♗b4 5.e5 h6 6.♗d2 ♗xc3 7.bxc3 ♘e4 8.♕g4 g6 9.♗d3 ♘xd2 10.♔xd2 c5 11.h4 ♕a5 12.♘f3 ♘c6 13.♕f4 cxd4 14.h5!



After the game Shirov said that this was the critical moment. 'I didn't take this double pawn sacrifice into account in my preparation.'

14...g5?!

'I thought this must be a mistake', said Anand.

15.♕f6 ♖f8 16.♕xh6 g4 17.♘g5 ♘xe5 18.♘h7 ♖h8

This turned out to be the first new move.

PETER DOGGERS

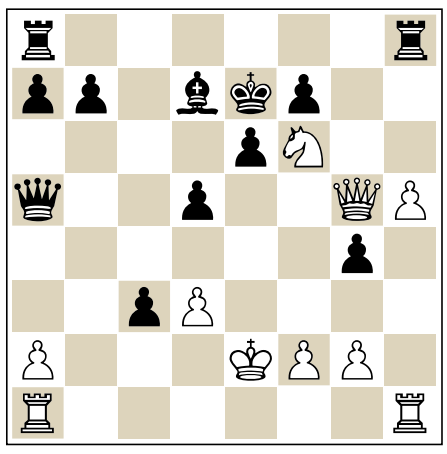
Looking at no one in particular, Alexey Shirov starts the post-mortem. Vishy Anand looks ready to reply to his suggestions.

18...dxc3+ 19.♔e2 ♕c5 20.♘xf8 ♕xf8 21.♕f6 1-0, Delorme-Flachet, Nantes 2006.

19.♔e2 ♘xd3

19...♕xc3 might still lead to a draw, but the position is extremely complicated and requires further analysis.

20.cxd3 ♗d7 21.♘f6+ ♔e7 22.♕g5! dxc3



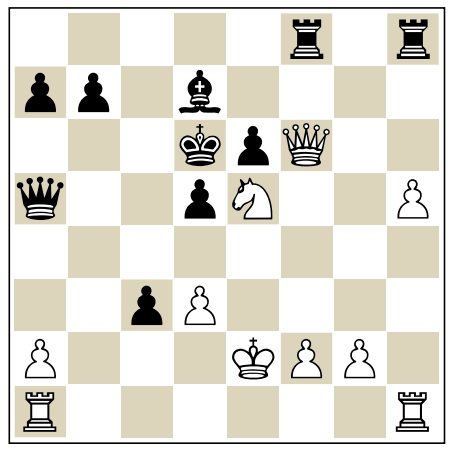
23.♘e4+?!

23.h6! ♗b5 24.a4 was winning for White, according to GM Romain Edouard.

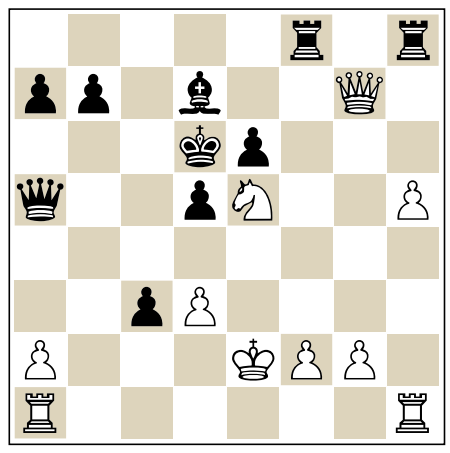
23...♔e8 24.♘f6+ ♔e7 25.♘xg4+ ♔d6 26.♘e5 f6 27.♕xf6

Anand had initially planned 27.♘c4+ ♔c5 28.♕e3+ d4 29.♕f4, but later he saw that Black escapes with 29...e5! 30.♕xf6 ♕c7.

27...♖af8



28.♕g7? Correct was 28.♘f7+! ♖xf7 (other moves lose for Black, e.g. 28...♔c5 29.♕e7+ or 28...♔c7 29.♕e5+ ♔c8 30.♖hc1 or 28...♔c6 29.♖hc1 ♖xh5 30.♖xc3+ ♔b6 31.♖b3+ ♔a6 32.♕e7 ♖xf7 33.♕xf7) 29.♕xf7, and White has an extra tempo compared to the game, e.g. 29...♕a4 30.♔f1 with winning chances for White.



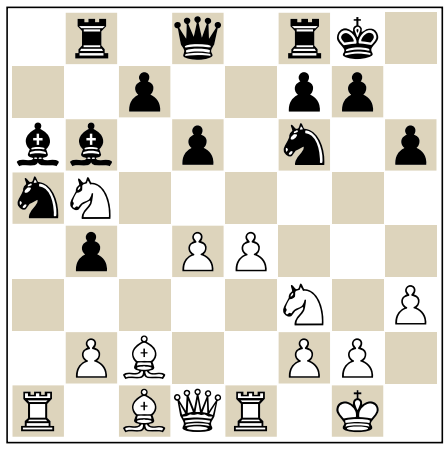
28...♕a4! Anand had missed this move and now heads for the draw. **29.♘f7+ ♖xf7 30.♕xf7 ♕c2+ 31.♔f1 ♕xd3+ 32.♔g1 ♕d2 33.♕g7 c2 34.♕xh8 c1♕+ 35.♖xc1 ♕xc1+ 36.♔h2 ♕f4+ 37.♔g1 ♕c1+ 38.♔h2**
Draw.

A disappointing result for the World Champion. 'Perhaps I should have played positionally,' he said after the game, 'but I was looking for forced lines too much. If you miss one move, you get punished.' Shirov lamented: 'Yes, the position suits my style, but not if I'm not in good form.'

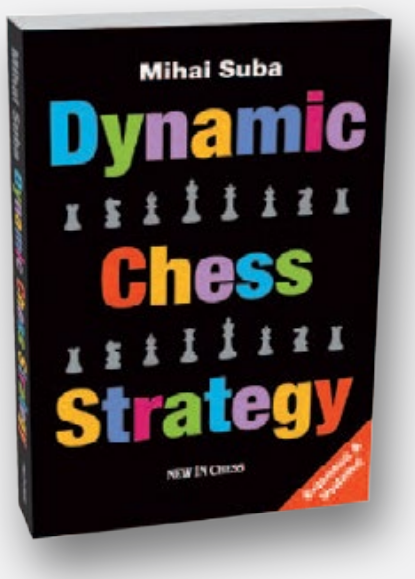
Remarkably, the players didn't complain about noise during this fourth round, although they had every reason to. Out of the blue, construction workers had appeared after the rest day to build thin wooden walls for an improvised, temporary market place, just metres away from the playing hall. Several moments loud drilling noises could be heard, which were surely audible from the other side of the glass.

On the morning of the fifth round the freshly re-elected FIDE President, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, briefly visited the tournament. He didn't just come to Bilbao to perform the first moves in the games of the fifth round. The main reason for his visit was his announcement, at a press conference just before the round, that FIDE and the Grand Slam Chess Association would be working together more closely from now on. Exactly what this means is not clear yet; it seems that there's a long way to go before Grand Slam tournaments can be part of the World Championship cycle. But if it means that in the future Grand Slam events and FIDE tournaments will be more evenly distributed in the calendar, that would already be a step forward.

In that fifth round Carlsen won his first (and only) game of the tournament. In Shirov's favourite Archangelsk Ruy Lopez, the Norwegian used a nifty knight manoeuvre which he had found during his preparation.



Carlsen-Shirov
position after 16...♗a6



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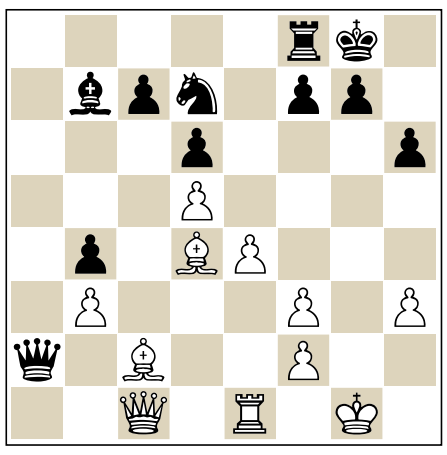
DAVID LLADA

Neither the starting fees nor the prize-money were made public in Bilbao. At a press-conference, to the amazement of the organizers, FIDE President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov jumped at the opportunity with a call for transparency, instead of providing details about how he won the elections in Khanty-Mansiysk.

17.♘a7!?

Threatening to take on a5, followed by ♘c6. Shirov praised his opponent: 'This plan of playing the knight to b5, and then to a7, was really interesting. I saw it, but I didn't believe it. Already the move ♘b5 was quite illogical, since it seems that the knight has nowhere to go after that. It was really a fantastic idea of Magnus.'

17...♗b7 18.d5 ♖a8 19.♘b5 ♘c4 20.♖xa8 ♕xa8 21.♘bd4 ♕a7 22.b3 ♘e5 23.♗b2 ♘xf3+ 24.gxf3 ♕a2 25.♕c1 ♗xd4 26.♗xd4 ♘d7



27.♔h1

Very strong was 27.♕d2! (threatening 28.♖a1) 27...♘e5 28.♔g2 ♕a5 29.f4 c5 30.♗xe5 dxe5 31.fxe5, and White is close to winning.

27...f6 28.♖g1 ♖f7 29.♕d2!

Winning pawn h6, because again 30.♖a1 is the main threat.

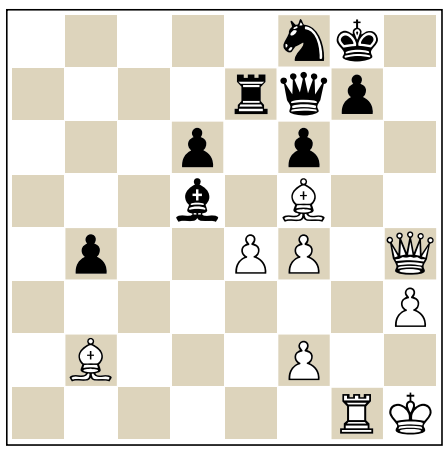
29...♕a8 30.♕xh6 ♘e5 31.♗d1! ♕e8 32.♕e3

Not bad, but with 32.f4! ♘d7 33.♗f3 White would probably have won much sooner.

32...c5 33.♗b2 ♖e7 34.f4 ♘d7 35.♕g3 ♕f7 36.♗f3 ♗a6 37.♗g4 ♘f8 38.♗f5

With half a minute left Shirov now tries to complicate matters.

38...c4 39.bxc4 ♗xc4 40.♕h4 ♗xd5!?



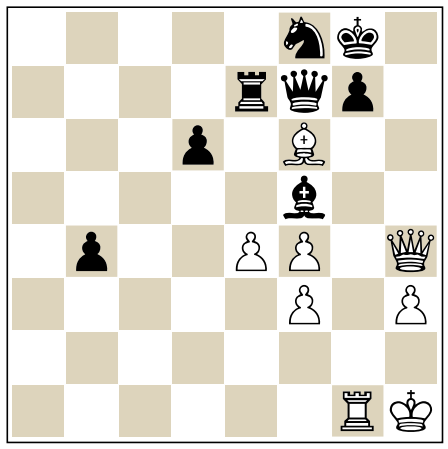
41.f3

The main idea was 41.exd5? ♕xd5+ 42.♔h2 ♕xf5. But 41.♗xf6!? was also possible: 41...♖xe4! 42.♔h2! ♖xf4 43.♕xf4 ♕xf6 44.♖d1 and wins.

41...♗e6 42.♗xf6

Bad is 42.♗xe6? ♕xe6 43.♗xf6 ♖f7 and White has lost most of his advantage.

42...♗xf5



43.exf5!

43.♗xe7 ♘g6 44.♕h5 ♘xe7 45.♕xf7+ ♔xf7 46.exf5 is less clear.

43...♖c7 44.♖xg7+ ♕xg7 45.♗xg7 ♖xg7

It's still not easy, but this time Magnus finishes the game pretty convincingly.

46.f6 ♖d7 47.♕e1 d5 48.♕xb4 d4 49.♕c4+ ♔h7 50.♕d3+

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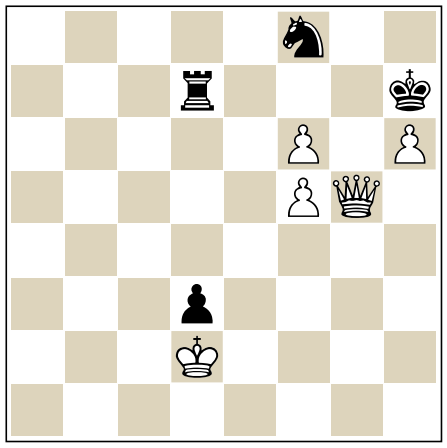
♔g8 51.f5 ♔f7 52.♔g2 ♔xf6 53.♔g3 ♔g7 54.h4 ♘h7 55.♔f2 ♘f6 56.♕d2 ♘h7 57.♔e1 d3 58.♕g2+ ♔h8 59.♔d2 ♘f8 60.♕g5 ♔h7 61.h5 ♔h8 62.f6 ♔h7 63.f4 ♔h8 64.h6 ♔h7 65.f5

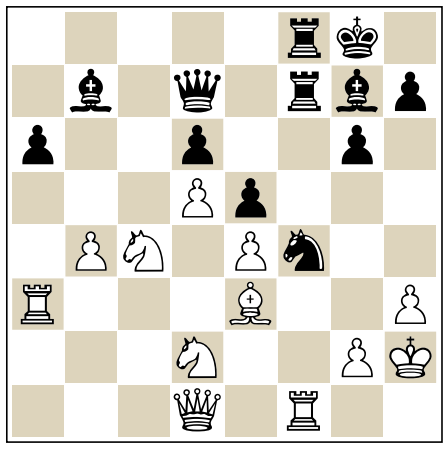


And Shirov resigned because of 65...♖f7 (65...♔h8 66.♕g7+! is White's main idea) 66.♔xd3 ♖d7+ 67.♔e4 ♖a7 68.♔d5 ♖a5+ 69.♔c6 ♖a7, and now that the white king is covering the d7-square he can go 70.♕g7+! ♖xg7 71.fxg7.

Anand and Kramnik also drew the second game in their mini-match rather quickly, and so the standings before the last round looked like this (note the football score!): 1. Kramnik 9 points, 2. Anand 7 points, 3. Carlsen 5 points and 4. Shirov 3 points. This meant that there was still the possibility of a blitz play-off, just like in Shanghai, but this time for first place – if Kramnik drew and Anand won.

Kramnik drew indeed, and rather quickly. He had black against Shirov, and in the same situation a month earlier he had been crushed by the Spaniard in a sharp Nimzo-Indian. This time the Russian didn't want to take risks and went for a more solid line.

Then Anand got excellent chances against Carlsen:

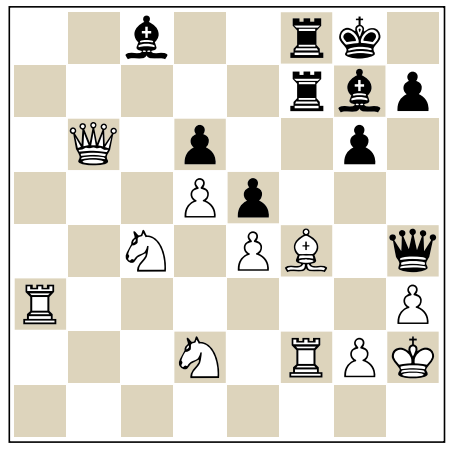


Anand-Carlsen
position after 34...♗g7

In this position Kramnik had just drawn his last game against Shirov. At the press commentary the Russian was asked what he thought of Anand's chances. He answered: 'I don't know, but one thing is for sure: he won't go for Rybka's first line, which is 35.♕a4.' Literally seconds later Anand played **35.♕a4** anyway, to the joy of the spectators.

35...♕e7 36.b5 axb5 37.♕xb5 ♗c8 38.♕b6 ♕g5 39.♖f2 ♕h4 40.♗xf4?!

After 40.♘f3! ♕h5 41.♘g1 it's unclear how Black should continue on the kingside, while White keeps the pressure on d6.



40...♖xf4 A beautiful computer line is 40...exf4! 41.♘xd6 ♕g3+!! 42.♖xg3 fxg3+ 43.♔xg3 ♗e5+ 44.♔h4 ♖xf2 45.♘xc8 ♗f6+ 46.♔g3 ♗e5+, and the game ends in a perpetual!

41.♖xf4 ♕xf4+

41...exf4!? 42.♕xd6 ♗d4 (threatening 43...♕f2) 43.♘f3! ♕g3+ 44.♔h1 ♕f2 45.♘xd4 ♕xd4 46.♘e5! ♕xe4 47.♔h2, and White is better, according to GM Sergey Shipov.

After 41...♖xf4? there follows 42.♘xd6.

42.♔g1 ♗h6

Here Shipov gave the line 42...♕h4! 43.♖f3 ♕e1+ 44.♔h2 ♕h4 45.♘xd6 ♖xf3 46.♘xf3 ♕f4+ 47.♔h1 ♗xh3!, and it will end in a draw.

43.♖f3

Not 43.♕xd6?? ♕f2+ 44.♔h1 ♕e1+ 45.♔h2 ♗f4+ 46.g3 ♗xd2 and Black wins.

43...♕g5

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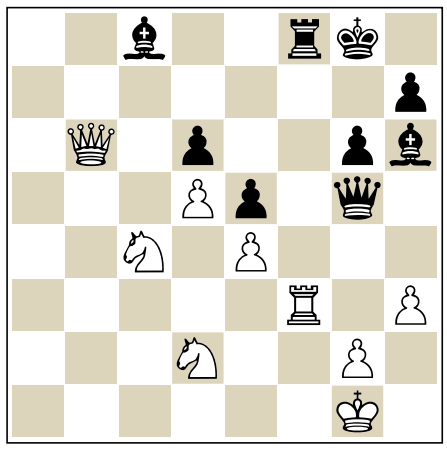
'And with a smile Anand offered a draw. Carlsen and chief arbiter Faik Gasanov smiled too, as they knew the tournament had been decided.'



44.♕c6?!

Only 44.♕xd6! would keep some slim winning chances alive. The amazing point is that after 44...♖xf3 White first goes 45.h4! (45.♘xf3? ♕c1+) 45...♕xh4 (45...♕g3 46.♘xf3 ♗h3 47.♕b8+ ♗f8 48.♘e3 ♗xg2 49.♘xg2 ♕xf3 50.♕xe5, Shipov) and then 46.♘xf3 ♕xe4 47.♕d8+ ♗f8 48.♕xc8 ♕xd5 49.♘fxe5 ♕c5+ 50.♕xc5 ♗xc5+ 51.♔h2.

44...♖xf3 45.♘xf3 ♕c1+ 46.♔f2 ♗d7!

This forces the draw.

47.♕xd7 ♕xc4 48.♕e6+ ♔g7 49.♕e7+ ♔g8 50.♕e6+ ♔g7

And with a smile Anand offered a draw.

Carlsen and chief arbiter Faik Gasanov, who was standing next to the board, smiled too, as they knew the tournament had been decided.

Even though he didn't win the game, Anand stayed ahead of Carlsen on the live ratings list in Bilbao. Thanks to a plus one score, against the Norwegian's minus one, the world's highest rated player and the World Champion were one and the same person again for the moment.

And so, after a tough first stage in Shanghai, and an even tougher Olympiad, Vladimir Kramnik managed to claim first prize. Interestingly, he felt it was an advantage that he had played many games just before this event: 'Maybe at my age I should start to play more, strangely enough, because in Dortmund I was actually terribly rusty. I hadn't played for three months and I feel that maybe I can no longer afford such long breaks. Shanghai was not great either. I was not catching the rhythm of the play really. But then, at the Olympiad I started to feel I was getting in good shape, strangely enough, although my result was nothing special. Even before coming here I told my wife that I felt that I was in good form, that I really felt my head was starting to work.'

Exactly 10 years after he beat Kasparov in London, Kramnik said about his victory in Bilbao: 'I am happy I can still compete with players of Anand's and Carlsen's calibre. But I still have ambitions to be the best chess player one day. This I cannot claim now, of course, but I'm not too far behind.'

NOTES BY

Vladimir Kramnik

QI 14.13 – E15
Vladimir Kramnik
Magnus Carlsen
Bilbao 2010 (1)

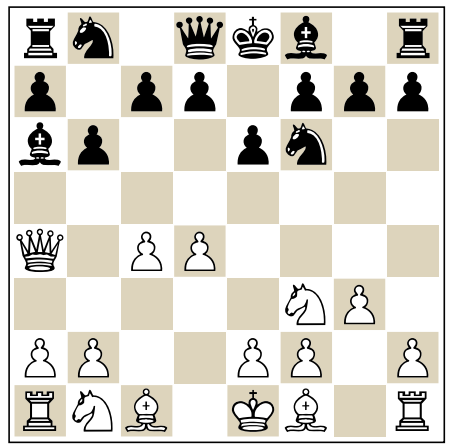
This game was played in the first round. After the Olympiad I felt reassured because I started to get in good shape in the second half. It didn't pay me too much dividends, except for a couple of rating points, but I could feel that my play was better than my result.

My only worries were about my energy, as basically this was already my third serious tournament in a row, which isn't so easy at my pensionary age. But during the entire Bilbao tournament I had enough energy, my head was working well and I was perfectly happy with my form.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♗a6

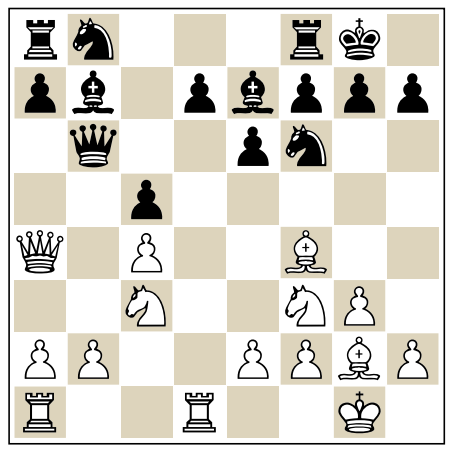
He also plays 4...♗b7, as he did against me three years ago in Nice.

5.♕a4



As everybody knows, Magnus plays almost everything, so it is difficult to predict what he is going to do. So what I did before the game was decide which line I was going to play against each opening. And in two or three instances I tried to repeat some lines where the play was getting forced. Against the Queen's Indian I had decided to play the 5.♕a4 line, which is pretty tricky and has become fashionable again lately.

5...♗b7 6.♗g2 c5 7.dxc5 bxc5 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♘c3 0-0 10.♖d1 ♕b6 11.♗f4



11...♖d8

All these moves are well-known. This position is a tabiya these days. The plans of both sides are very simple. It's very difficult to achieve these objectives, but essentially they are simple. White is putting pressure on the black d-pawn, which will soon go to

d6, and he has little other play in this position. Black has a strategically very sound position, with one extra pawn in the centre, so if he manages to develop without too many concessions, he will be at least equal. But there are many nuances and different move orders.

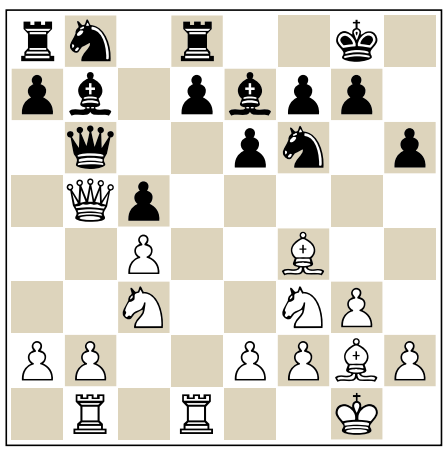
11...♖d8 is one of these nuances, as Black's main move used to be 11...d6; but then they discovered the possibility 12.♖ab1, threatening b4, which was considered dangerous for Black. This was discovered some 10 years ago, and then they started to play the rook to d8, trying to avoid ♖ab1. But in Dortmund 2009, against Bacrot, I opted for 12.♖ab1 anyway. The idea is not to protect the pawn on b2, which cannot be taken, but to be ready to play b4 once Black plays ...d6.

However, the main move is still 12.♖d2, a move with a lot of theory which I have already played with both white and black. As White I won against Karjakin with 12.♖d2 in Nice this year.

12.♖ab1 h6

I had the feeling that Magnus had been mainly preparing for 12.♖d2. Here, after some thought, he decided to follow in Bacrot's footsteps. In that game Black got a decent position out of the opening after 13.a3 a5 14.♕b5 ♕xb5 15.cxb5 d5 16.♘e5 g5 17.♗e3 ♘bd7, and now it started to be rather forced after 18.♘c6 ♗xc6 19.bxc6 ♘e5, and finally it all ended in a logical draw.

13.♕b5



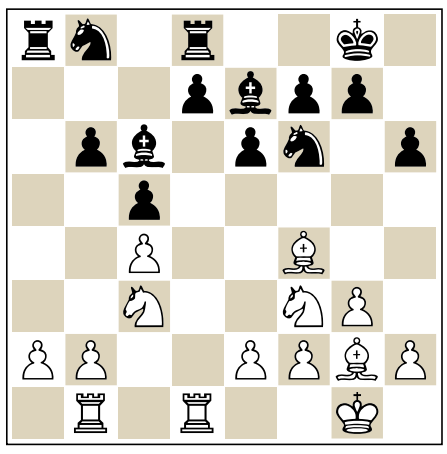
So that's why I decided to play the queen to b5 immediately, because I think the inclusion of a3 and ...a5 probably is in Black's favour.

13...♗c6

One of the ideas of 13.♕b5 is that if Black plays 13...d6, White can go 14.b4 again. It's not clear how advantageous this is but it's a decent try, and possibly because Magnus was worried about this, he went 13...♗c6, forcing the exchange of the queens.

14.♕xb6 axb6

Now all logical factors in the position indicate that Black should be fine, but if you dig deeper you will find that in reality it is not so easy.



15.b3

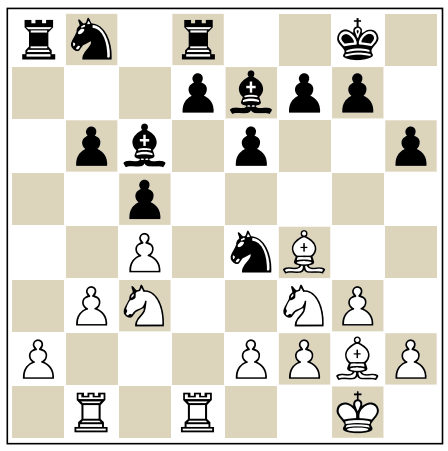
This is an inaccuracy. I knew what I wanted to do, but for some reason I decided to delay it by one move and this could have been a serious mistake.

I should have played 15.♗xb8 at once, of course. This was my original plan, but these days there are so many lines that sometimes you cannot remember everything precisely. Taking on b8 immediately is White's only chance to fight for an advantage. It basically leads to the same position as in the game, but it eliminates a good option that Black had on move 15. After 15.♗xb8 play would continue 15...♖axb8 16.♘e5 ♗xg2 17.♔xg2 ♖bc8 18.e4.

15...g5

Magnus played this rather hurriedly, probably thinking he had no problems whatsoever.

Having moved 15.b3, I started to wonder about 15...♘e4!, and I started to panic, as I didn't see a way to fight after this move. And this was true, as I checked after the game: this move equalizes on the spot:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

16.♘xe4 ♗xe4 17.♖b2 ♗f6 18.♗e5 ♘c6 19.♗xf6 gxf6, and in this position there is little to play for.

16.♗xb8

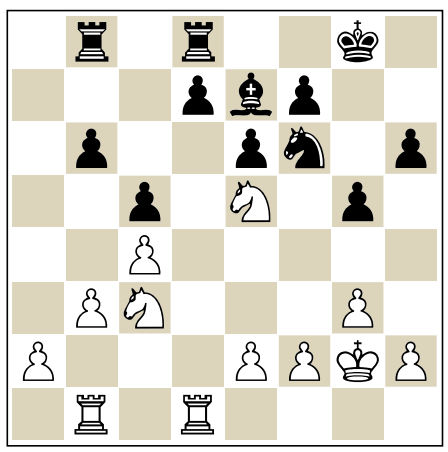
Now, despite my 'fingerfehler' I get to the position I was striving for anyway.

16.♗c7 looks tempting, but after 16...♖c8 17.♗d6 ♔f8 I don't see what White can achieve.

16...♖axb8

There is not much difference after 16...♖dxb8 17.♘e5 ♗xg2 18.♔xg2.

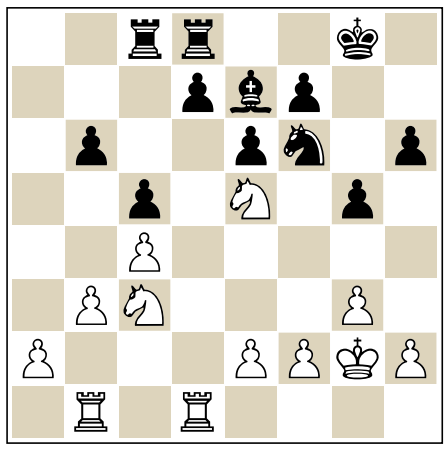
17.♘e5 ♗xg2 18.♔xg2



After the game I thought that up to this point it looks very much like a game of an inexperienced young player who is playing against an older and much

stronger master and desperately trying to make a draw, exchanging queens, taking on b8, then exchanging bishops...
However, strangely enough the position is not without venom. The white knights are pretty powerful, and it is also important that the black b-pawn has moved to b6, where it can be a target. Black's main problem is his bishop, which is very difficult to activate. Once he manages that, he will be OK. But as the game also proved, this is easier said than done.

18...♖bc8

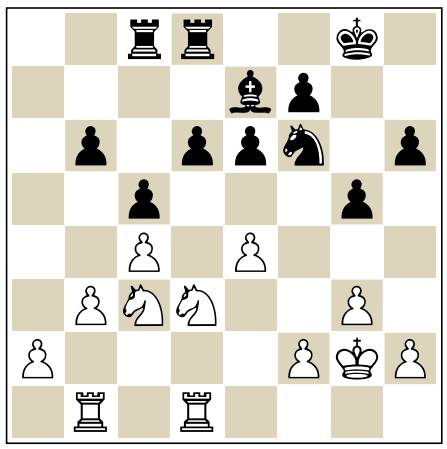


19.e4

I have to stop ...d5. I saw that I could play 19.♘a4, but this doesn't work because of 19...d6 20.♘xb6 dxe5 21.♘xc8 ♖xc8 22.a4 ♖a8. Actually, I am giving this rather absurd variation because I was very surprised to find out that in the final position Rybka initially slightly prefers White, whereas to any human chess player it is clear that White is simply lost here. The Rybka guys still have something to work on.

19...d6 20.♘d3

And definitely not 20.♘f3, if only because of 20...g4. White's plan here is to push f4 and start play on the kingside and in the centre. Black, on the other hand, is solid but has no active play at all and can only watch White making a series of small improving moves, like f4, a4, ♔f3, ♘b5, and doubling rooks on the d-file. The position is really easy to play for White, and easy play is sometimes even more important than an objective assessment. Objectively speaking, I don't think White's advantage is serious, but all moves came very naturally to me during the game and took me little time.

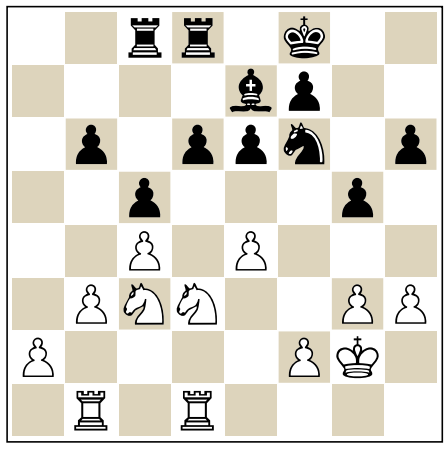


20...♔f8

During the game I considered 20...g4, which is slightly strange, but at least it stops f4. However, the drawback is that after 21.h3 h5 22.♘f4 the black kingside becomes a bit vulnerable. But still, it was an interesting alternative and I seriously considered it.
The only drawback of 20.♘d3 was that Black could try 20...d5, but after 21.exd5 exd5 Magnus was afraid of a move that none of the computers showed and therefore none of the commentators of this game did either: 22.♘b2!, which was exactly what I was going to play, forcing Black to go 22...d4, when after 23.♘b5 ♘e8 24.♘d3 White has a nice blockade. Here Rybka assesses the position as almost equal, but to the human eye it is clear that White is pressing and that Black will suffer for a long time.
The text-move, 20...♔f8, is a bit soft, as the king is not much better on f8 than on g8 and he gives me the opportunity to start pushing my pawns.

21.h3

A prophylactic move, because after 21.f4 he has 21...♘g4. I don't know whether it's so dangerous for White, but I didn't see any reason to give him this chance.

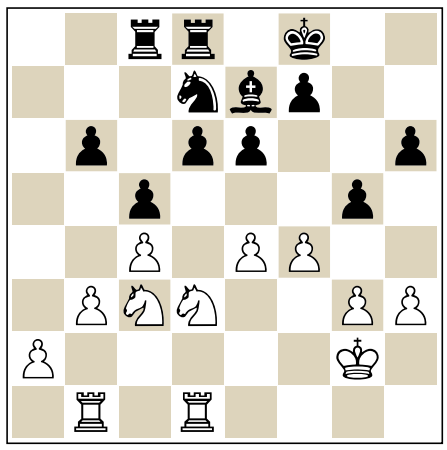


21...♘d7

This is what I had expected, as the most logical plan for Black is to activate the bishop via f6 and try to move the knight to d4 (via b8 and c6), the weakness in White's position.
21...d5 would lead to the same situation we just saw after 22.exd5 exd5 23.♘b2 d4 24.♘b5.

22.f4

Here Rybka prefers 22.♘b5, but I am not so sure, because I don't like that Black can play 22...♘f6 23.e5 ♘e8, and I don't see what White has really gained.



22...♘b8

This looks normal, but having analysed the game I feel that this was the first inaccuracy that led to an unpleasant position for Black.
He should probably have played 22...♗f6, which looks risky because of 23.♘b5 ♔e7, and Black's position looks disharmonious, as after for instance ...♘b8 White has the e5 push. However, in reality it seems to work. White retains

PETER DOGGERS

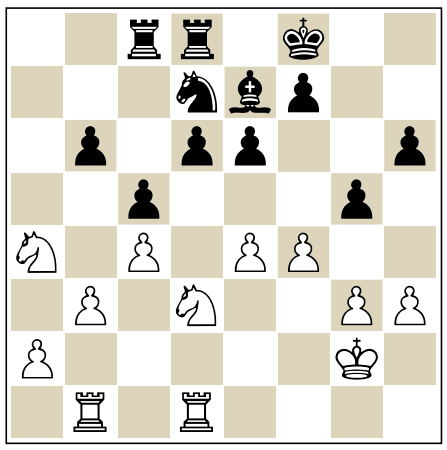
Vladimir Kramnik: 'Call me a pervert, but this is the kind of chess I like.'
(The chess he played against Carlsen, not chess with a Basque hat on his head)

a plus, but Black's position is definitely better than in the game.

23.♘a4 The first of a nice sequence of moves.

I could also have played 23.♘b5 ♘c6 24.♘b2, moving the knight to a4, when I am 'blocking' him. On the other hand, however, with the knights on b5 and a4 I cannot do much either.

23...♘d7 Now he wants to play ...♗f6, as I no longer have ♘b5.



24.♘f2!

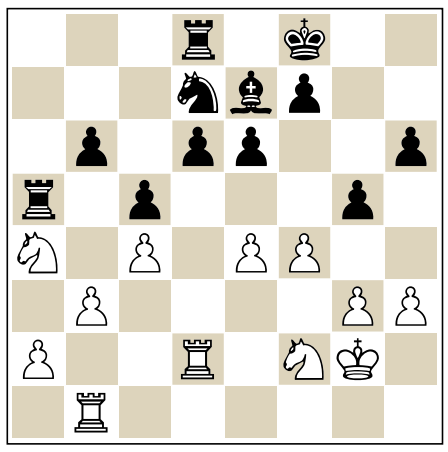
This looks insignificant, but it is a very important move, as I am stopping 24...♗f6. The knights on a4 and f2 look less harmonious than on c3 and d3, where they were a couple of moves ago, but this is a very nice prophylactic position, as I can block all Black's play. Now I can slowly start executing my plan: doubling on the d-file, getting my king to f3 and threatening e5.

24...♖a8

If he plays 24...♖b8, I go back with 25.♘c3 and his rook occupies the square for the knight, while after 25...♗f6 I have 26.♘b5, and d6 will fall.

And the same goes for 24...♖c6 25.♘c3 ♘b8 26.♘b5, and again the rook on c6 is in the knight's way.

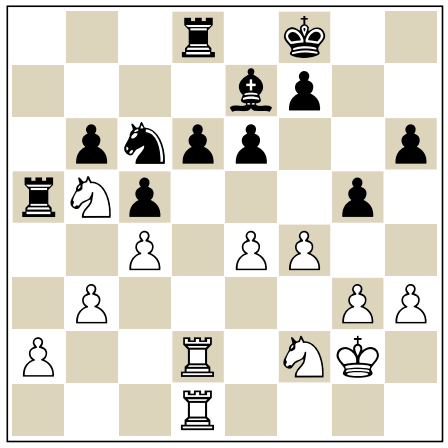
25.♖d2 ♖a5



He wants to push ...b5 and get some counterplay, as otherwise his position will seriously deteriorate very quickly.

26.♘c3 ♘b8 27.♖bd1 This is more interesting than 27.a4, which I also considered. But then, after 27...♘c6 28.♘b5, I don't get time to play ♖bd1, because he will go 28...♘a7!, kicking out my knight. Still, after 29.♘xa7 ♖xa7 30.♖bd1 ♔e8 31.♔f3 White is pressing.

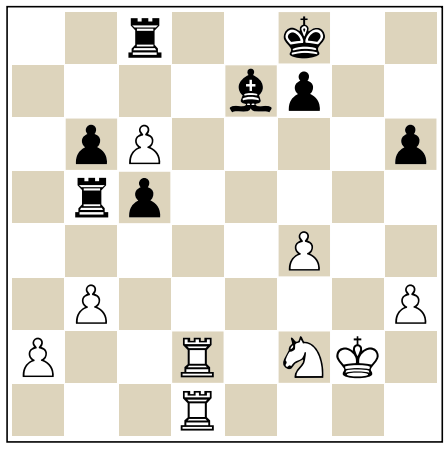
27...♘c6 28.♘b5



28...gxf4 After the game Magnus called this a serious mistake. He could still exchange a pair of knights here, which I thought was a better option: 28...♘d4, but I believed that the change in the pawn-structure would favour White. The knight puts up a nice blockade on d3 and I get the chance to create a passed pawn on the queenside: 29.♘xd4 cxd4 30.a4 gxf4 31.gxf4 ♗f6 32.♘d3 (or I can choose another plan, indicated by the computer, which wants to force Black to play ...e5: 32.♘g4 ♗g7 33.♘h2 ♗f6 34.♘f3 e5 35.♔f1 ♖e8 36.fxe5 dxe5 37.♖g2,

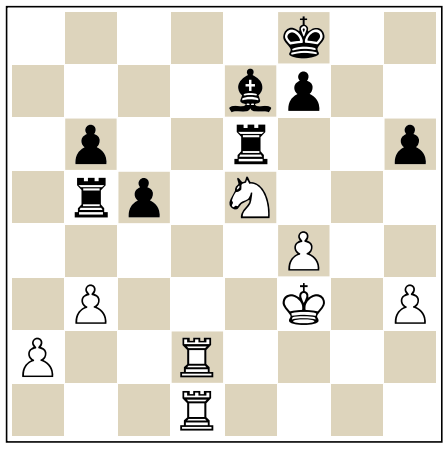
and Black has a terrible bishop). Magnus believed that pushing 28...d5 immediately would have been more accurate. This may be true, but after 29.exd5 exd5 30.cxd5 ♖xb5 31.dxc6 ♖c8 32.♘g4 ♖xc6 33.♔f3 I don't see a big difference, and believe that Black's position is still unpleasant. Having the g-pawns on the board doesn't give me the mating threats I had in the game, but my pieces are active and he is suffering.

29.gxf4 d5 30.exd5 exd5 31.cxd5 ♖xb5 32.dxc6 ♖c8



As there is not that much material left on the board and the material is equal, Magnus probably thought that he'd manage to make a draw. However, with energetic play White can highlight Black's problem and in the further course of the game there was, in fact, only one moment where he could have improved and kept some chances to save the game.

33.♘g4 ♖xc6 34.♘e5 It was not bad at all to play 34.♔f3 first, but it would probably end up leading to the game. **34...♖e6 35.♔f3**

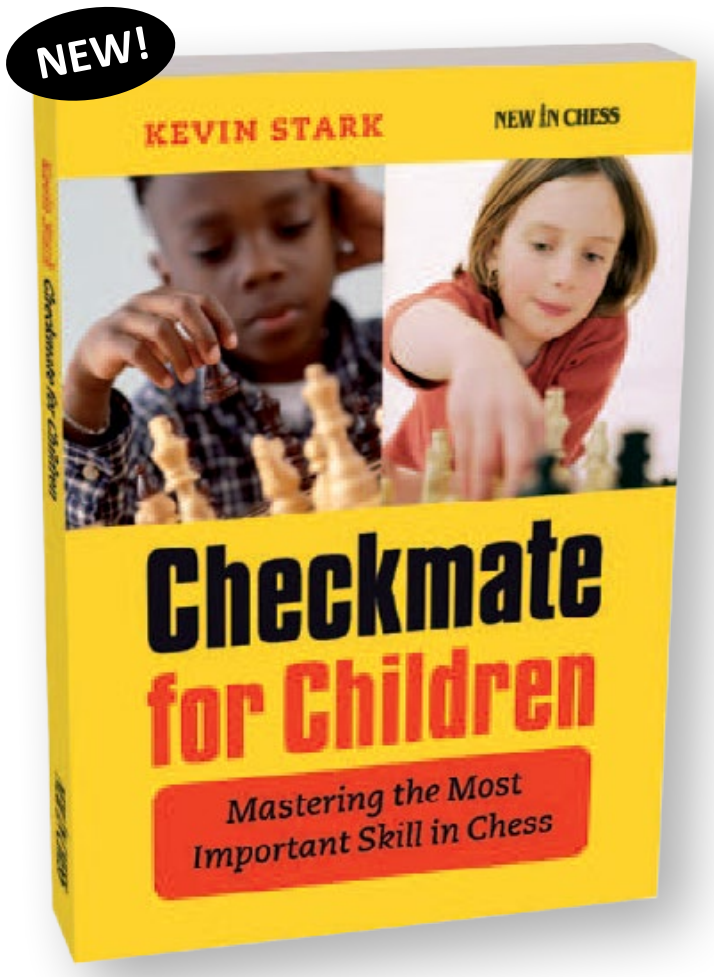


35...♖a5?

White's initiative is getting serious. After the game Magnus admitted he had missed my opportunity to start an attack along the g-file. This is the reason why 35...♖a5 deserves a question mark: it is the decisive mistake.

During the game I thought that the only move to stay in the game was 35...♖b4, as this allows him to play ...♖d4 at some point and stop me from occupying the d-file. I hesitated here, and I think that I would probably have played 36.♖d7 (although 36.♖d5 is probably more accurate) because it is more active.

But the computer points out the remarkable 'inhuman' resource 36...♗f6! here (I was concentrating more on 36...♖f6 37.♘d3 ♖d4 38.♖xd4 cxd4 39.♘e5, with a technically winning endgame), when White is still better, but Black is holding.



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Bilbao 2010 **cat. XXII**

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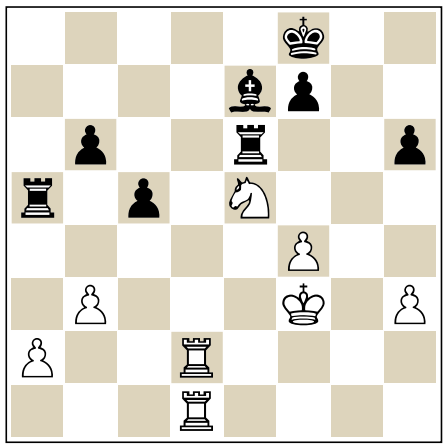
2	Vishy Anand	IGM	IND	2800	1 1	**	3 1	1 1	8	2841
3	Magnus Carlsen	IGM	NOR	2826	0 1	0 1	**	1 3	6	2720
4	Alexey Shirov	IGM	ESP	2749	0 1	1 1	1 0	**	4	2676

3 points per win, 1 for a draw

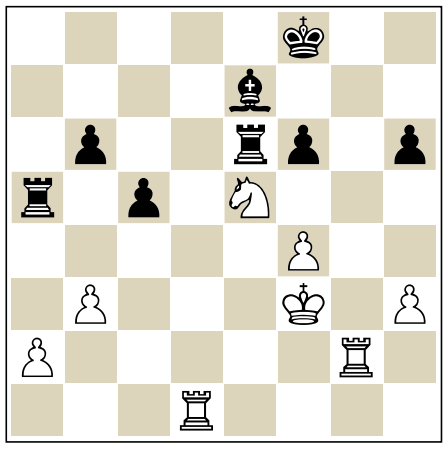


36.♖g2!

I am threatening 37.♘d7+ and 38.♖g8+, and there is not that much Black can do about it.

36...f6

Just bad is 36...f5 in view of 37.♖d7 b5 38.♖b7, and because of the threat 39.♖b8 he has to go 38...♖a8, which loses the b-pawn. Or 36...♗f6 37.♘d7+ ♔e7 38.f5, and all of a sudden his rook doesn't have any acceptable squares, as 38...♖c6 runs into 39.♖e2+, with a winning check.



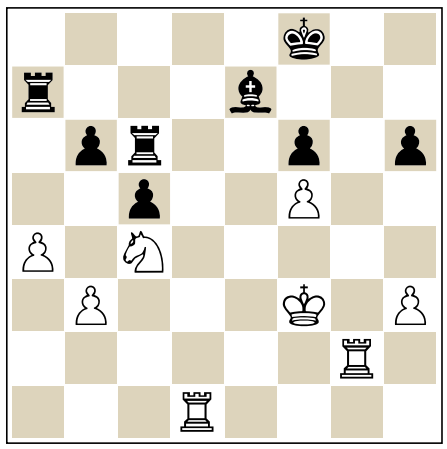
37.♘c4!

This was an important move. It was tempting to give a check with the knight, but I couldn't find anything decisive.

37...♖a7

37...♖a8 would lead more or less to the same.

38.f5 ♖c6 39.a4!

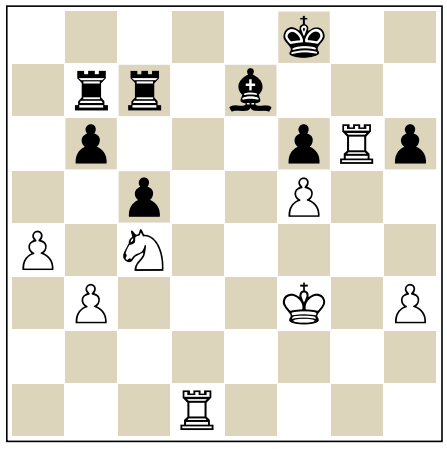


The final touch. Black is almost in zugzwang.

39...♖b7

Not really threatening 40...b5 because of 41.♘a5, so I have all the time in the world to improve my position.

40.♖g6 h5 Unfortunately, Magnus decided to push his h-pawn, as he briefly seemed to have been on the verge of playing 40...♖cc7, after which I had seen a very nice line that would have been a beautiful end to this game – from my perspective, that is:

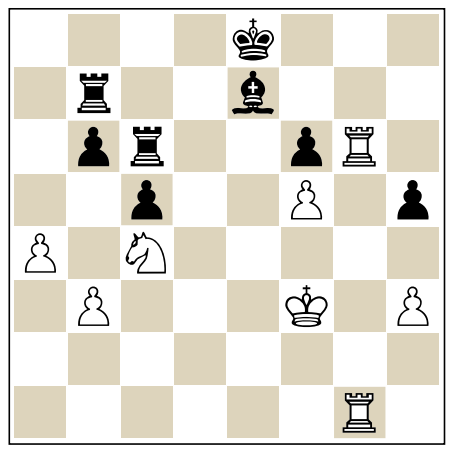


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

41.♖dg1 ♔e8 42.♖g8+ ♔d7 43.♖d1+ ♔c6 44.♘e5+! fxe5 45.♖g6+ ♗d6 46.♖gxd6, and the black king is in the bag.

41.♖dg1 I calculated a few lines and found a forced win.

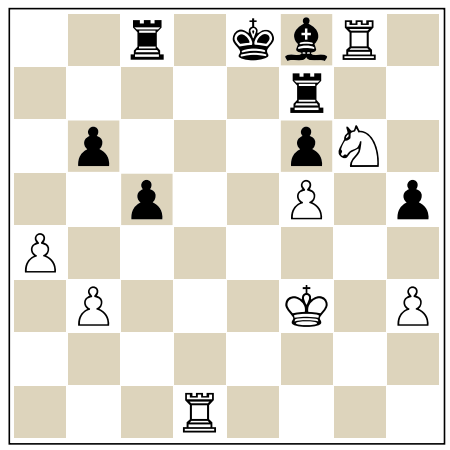
41...♔e8



42.♘e5 When I went 40.♖g6, I was thinking of this move and not about winning the h-pawn.

42...♖c8 43.♖g8+ ♗f8 44.♘g6 ♖f7 44...♔f7 fails to 45.♘xf8.

45.♖d1!



Finishing the wrapping. This final position I also find aesthetically attractive, because Black is totally 'wrapped in'. He can only move his rook to a8 and b8, while White can choose the winning plan of his liking. It goes without saying that Magnus didn't wait for this and resigned.

All in all, this is a game to my taste, because I like the fact that Black made no obvious mistakes, only two or three inaccuracies. Secondly, this is one of my favourite motifs in chess, when with limited material you manage to create total domination. That's why, for example, the studies I like most are domination studies. Call me a pervert, but this is the kind of chess I like.

Sculptor meets chess player

At the end of November, German sculptor Bertrand Freiesleben made a bust of Vladimir Kramnik in Paris. **Dirk Poldauf** had secured the exclusive privilege of being present at the start of the planned series of chess giants, and used the opportunity to initiate a discussion with the fourteenth World Champion about the themes of chess and art.

When I enter Kramnik's living-room on a grey and rainy day, the great work is almost finished. The hero is sitting on a chair, with next to him, on a wooden stand, a clay bust that shows an unmistakable likeness.

Bertrand Freiesleben is constantly changing position. First he kneels on a set of cushions, getting up every so often to retreat a few steps and study the object from a 10-feet distance. Then he hunkers down and starts hopping. The former Federal Presi-

The artist in action. Frantically moving between bust and model, Bertrand Freiesleben tries to catch the features of Vladimir Kramnik. Kramnik's daughter Darija, his wife Marie-Laure and Dirk Poldauf attentively follow the process.

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dent of Germany, Walter Scheel, once told him that he looked like a tennis player waiting for his opponent to serve the ball. Then Freiesleben jumps up, takes a few giant strides with his clay modelling tool at the ready, and hits the bust several whacks. 'Now I tackle the eyes', he calls. The way he works is surprisingly lively. The artist likes communicating with his subject while he works. 'I am always curious about the people with whom I work', he says. He tells me that Kramnik's head has a Greco-Roman shape and a striking nose. 'Dark eyebrows', he murmurs. 'Yes, like Brezhnev', says Kramnik. 'No. No. Not at all!' exclaims the artist. 'You can take a bit away from the cheeks, because normally I am thinner', says Kramnik. 'But I am not so talented that I know how it will look then', counters the German.

They have been at it for a few hours. Kramnik compares the procedure to a game of chess. In the beginning there was a lump of clay – the starting position. Then, move by move, the game unfolds. At this point they were just entering the endgame, he reckons. 'We are at move 32', says Bertrand, barging in. Is there a touch of time-trouble? Yes, a little, says Kramnik, because the light is fading. But no worries: the floodlights have already been lit to illuminate the scene. Oliver Schwartz from Berlin films and takes photographs of the event. Kramnik does not find posing a strain, since it is not a rigid pose that he is required to maintain for two solid hours. Bertrand explains the various steps and discovers an expert in Kramnik, for the Russian's father is also a sculptor. During one of the short breaks they go to Kramnik's study. A chess board with a Queen's Gambit position sits on the table, next to a laptop; one of the bookshelves contains a second one. Books and cups abound. The boxing gloves of one of the Klitschko brothers are dangling somewhere as well, the chess player being good friends with both of them. Kramnik takes down a book and talks shop with Freiesleben about the work of sculptress Anna Chromy. Vladimir comes from an artistic dynasty. In the days of the former Soviet Union, the family of four had a 40 square metre house in the little town of Tuapse on the Black Sea – ample by erstwhile Soviet standards, but still pretty cramped. They had only one table, which they used for meals, which is why Vladimir played chess on a little magnetic board on the floor. He often trained in his father's workshop, where he saw him producing, amongst other things, whole series of Lenin heads. In their house, the revolutionary Soviet leader was used as a highly effective nutcracker.

In the meantime, Vladimir has thoroughly made up for the lack of space. Together with his wife Marie-Laure and their little daughter Darija he lives in a big, 180 square metre owner-occupied house in the eighth Arrondis-

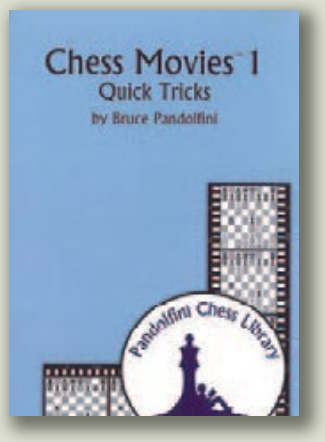
sement. Once in Paris, his love of art got hold of him again, because, he says, if you live here, it would be a sin not to be interested in these things. A 10-minute walk from their house is the Louvre museum, and the Musée d'Orsay and the Musée Rodin are also within walking distance. In the past he used to run through a museum in three hours, but 'then you don't really see anything. Somehow all paintings run together in your head and you lose all sense of beauty.' These days he pays more frequent visits to the museums, but always only briefly. Forty minutes in the Louvre, he has found, is ideal for him, and on each visit he concentrates on one particular section. He prefers to seriously study the exhibits and derive true enjoyment from them. His favourite painters? That depends on the mood of the moment. He mentions the Impressionists, who are particularly well represented in the Musée d'Orsay, but also classical painters like Raphael or Botticelli, illustrated tomes of whom fill his bookshelves together with many others. And modern art? 'That is not really my thing.'

Meanwhile, wife and daughter have entered. 'This is incredible!' exclaims Marie-Laure, studying her husband's bust in its endgame stage, while the little girl wanders between the giant's legs. Having a child has totally changed his outlook on life, says Vladimir. A month from now, Darija will be two. The ravishing Marie-Laure works as a journalist for *Le Figaro*. She is quite an accomplished piano player. The music stand of the instrument in the living-room contains open sheet music of Chopin's *Valses*. When Vladimir was small, his mother – a music teacher – tried to teach him music, but the boy wasn't very interested: 'I had already gone far too deeply into chess. Besides, I am not blessed with any great talent for music, nor for art in general. In school I was useless at drawing. I had no spatial sense and was a complete nitwit as far as these things were concerned. I opted for chess, and I think this was essentially a good choice.' And who would argue with this?!
But there was still a little question...

But isn't chess also an art?

'Without a doubt, but of a different kind, a very abstract art. It is close to classical music, since it is also connected to mathematics. Classical compositions are characterized by a very rigid mathematical structure. But I wouldn't compare chess to the performing arts or to music, because both of them are far more important for people than chess. But music and painting can also become crafts, or pure business. Many people regard chess as a business or a sport. For me it is also an art, at least partly.' When playing a game, Kramnik allows himself to be guided by visual effects, too. He finds it very hard to express in words, but in certain positions he might regard one move as more harmonious than another. And if, at the end of a deeply calculated variation, the more harmonious move has not been refuted, you tend to play this move rather than one that is also playable but that you didn't really like the look of. 'I don't know. I think this takes one to the level of aesthetics or intuition. Or maybe to another level altogether. But it's true: not all moves are equal!'

Scientific research has established that good chess players remember certain patterns, and that it is this ability that distinguishes them from weaker players. What does Vladimir think of this? 'The general level of chess has developed to such an extent that not only good players but also bad ones remember these patterns now', he counters with a laugh. Virtually every player these days, he says, knows what to do in this or that type of position. This has levelled out the differences, making it more difficult to distinguish between top and average grandmasters. Those days, alas, are gone. Nowadays everyone knows everything. But knowing something is one thing, applying it in practice is quite another. Everything revolves around one's performance, and in this area, other considerations decide, for example the ability to build up and maintain tension and to play at one's best even in nerve-racking situations like time-trou-



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ble. But do these constantly recurring positional *patterns* not have artistic aspects, too? 'In some ways they do', says Kramnik. 'But it is always about a concrete position. Even when the overall structure is the same, the conclusions don't always have to be. This is the same as in art. Take, for example, Bertrand's work today. A lot of it is probably repetitive. But in the end it always involves one concrete human being. He must always find certain nuances that, in their final effect, determine the work of art. This is the same as in chess, except that there we also have an opponent, which makes things even more complicated. Many people who are not so familiar with this subject think that virtually everything in chess is to do with memory. That you only have to remember a lot of things and know about an equal amount. If it was that simple, there would be a lot more great chess players. (laughs)'

SCHWARTZ-BERLIN

Bertrand Freiesleben 'hopping like a tennis player waiting for his opponent to serve the ball'.

'A painter paints'

To this day, Vladimir is confronted with this famous quote from a New In Chess interview with Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam after his world championship match against Peter Leko in Brissago 2004. It was his answer to the criticism about the (overly) large number of short draws he had played. As a result, he was accused of arrogance towards the general public. Six years later, the former World Champion once again explains his controversial viewpoint. 'Anyone who has made it into the world's top-10 in any area – be it medicine, business, art, chess, or football – is fully entitled to do what they deem necessary. If I go to a concert of a famous pianist or violinist and don't like the performance, then it's my problem, not theirs.' The artist is too important, has suffered too much to develop his mastership to be the butt of random criticism. He – Kramnik – had forced nobody to watch his games. Why should he change anything, considering that there are so many people with so many different tastes? If one does one's work honestly – in the deepest sense of that word – one must not do it to please certain people. On the contrary, it has to come from within the soul. Vladimir refers to painters who used a lot of dark hues or in whose works slumbered some latent aggression. But he refuses to accept this accusation of arrogance. He himself has no time for this 'give-me-my-money-back' mentality, and insofar as he is determined to stick to his principles, you might even say that he is not a person of his time.

It looks as if Bertrand Freiesleben – the artist – has made this aspect of Kramnik visible. The Greco-Roman head, cast in clay, of the 14th World Champion radiates a monolithic feeling of elusiveness. But there is also this little smile, which slightly irritates Kramnik. Does this not look more like Kasparov? This faint curling of the lips that seems to say: 'I am who I am!' But then again, maybe it's the smile of a champion.

As a spectator of chess games Kramnik also has his penchants. As an example of a player whose collected games he would buy, as he puts it, he mentions Alexander Grischuk. He finds the play of his compatriot more attractive than that of many younger players. In his games you can see certain concepts, a strategy, logic, a palpable attempt to produce a game that hangs together from start to finish and could possibly be regarded as a work of art. Maybe I'm just a boring person, but that is what I like, says Vladimir. As opposed to this, there are grandmasters who play 'move by move', preferring a very concrete style with lots of tactics and traps. 'Entertaining chess' even. But he likes Grischuk (and also Ivanchuk), because their games have a logical build-up between start and finish, giving you

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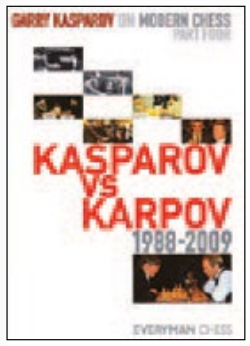

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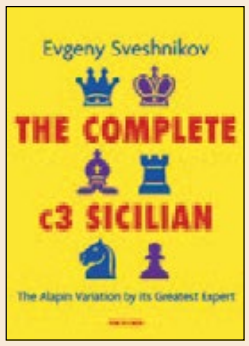

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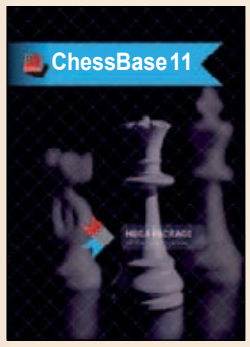

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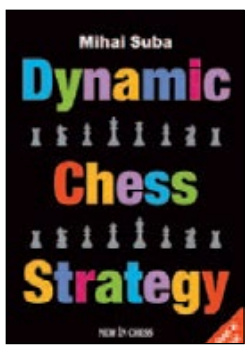

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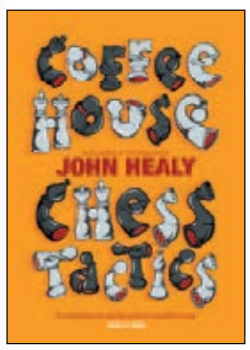

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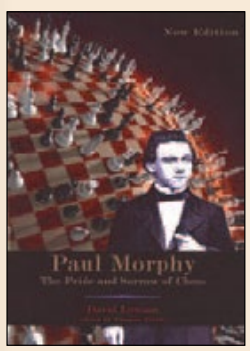

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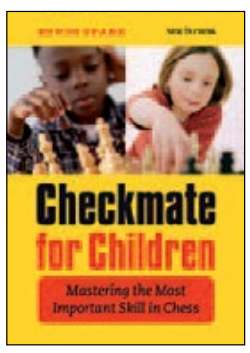

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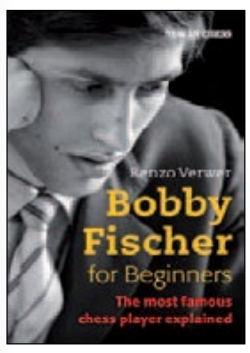

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the impression that the final position has almost organically grown out of the first move. In their games, everything develops on the basis of a refined and deep scenario, and this was precisely what gave him the greatest enjoyment. Chess allows for many different approaches, so it is pointless to complain about players that one doesn't like. You can't, after all, force people to play in a certain way. We are not in the army, are we, where everyone has to stand rigidly in line?

Kramnik makes no bones about it: he is still harbouring the ambition of once more becoming World Champion. And on this point, does he still have the creative reserves? 'The reserves are there, of course. It is just that, as one gets older, it becomes more difficult to put them into practice. Creativity demands a lot of energy and an enormous amount of preparation. Unfortunately, we no longer live in a time like that of Bronstein who, after sitting down at the board, would start thinking about the first move for 50 minutes, starting to be creative right there. But even now, in the computer era, plenty of interesting and creative games are still being played. For us professionals, life has become more complicated, because we have to be so much better prepared. But in every top tournament – the recent Tal Memorial in Moscow, for instance – you will see many interesting and complicated games. In my opinion, neither the quality of the games, nor the creativity involved has changed. We only have to work twice or three times as hard as before. But what can you do? We'll just have to knuckle down! (laughs)'

SCHWARTZ-BERLIN

At the end of a well-spent working day, one for the family album.

Chronicler of our time

All told, including the first evening that he contacted his subject and the two were introduced, Bertrand Freiesleben has worked on the Kramnik bust for almost three days. The possessor of the *Grand Prix* from the *Académie des Beaux-Arts* predominantly works in series. After politicians, actors and others, it is now the chess players' turn. What he has in mind is a general historical appreciation, which he wants to express in a series of sculptures of the most important chess celebrities of our time. He wants to make them *recognizable*, to us and to later generations, in a series of portraits whose quality will hopefully guarantee that both they and their subjects will be preserved for posterity. Haptically manifest, sensually tangible and the opposite of virtual – transient, fleeting pictures – but instead with a physical claim on the room which they occupy as a solid and concrete presence. Ideally, they should be placed at the end of an exposition.

Three years ago, he sculpted Viktor Kortchnoi. Kramnik liked this work a lot, which may be part of the reason why he received the Berlin artist in the first place. Freiesleben is of the opinion that chess players have exceptional heads. He is always interested in people who are intensely occupied with something. 'What is the result of consistently living one approach to life? Looked at it like this, you could see chess as a condensate. All kinds of different people can develop all their lives as if directed by a simple control device – till one suddenly perceives their individual personality.' The artist regards Vladimir as a humanistically broadly cultured person, able to think in a highly abstract way which, in his view, enables him to look at the world through very sober eyes. 'I like this very much, as opposed to people who emotionalize everything. With him you can have a factual discussion about any subject. We were very cordially received, giving me the feeling that I had been going in and out of this house for years. He confirmed what I have experienced many times before: the more brilliant a person, the more modest, open and courteous they are. They don't need to draw attention to themselves. I see in Vladimir a healthy and agreeable self-awareness.'

The Return of the Magnus

His form at the Olympiad had been shaky and his result in Bilbao sparked talk about 'a crisis'. Crisis, what crisis? At the third Pearl Spring tournament in Nanjing, Magnus Carlsen silenced all critics and doubting Thomases. The Norwegian's final score was slightly less astounding than his stellar performance last year, but comfortably enough to finish one point ahead of World Champion Vishy Anand and reclaim the top spot in the Live Ratings. On the other side of the globe, Carlsen's campaign was closely followed by his friend and compatriot **Jon Ludvig Hammer**

Many fans were worried about Magnus and his poor showing at the Olympiad. The Norwegian team is a force to be reckoned with when we have the world's number one on our first board! But at the same time, we do not have the same breadth as other countries that are top-20 candidates, so our result depends a lot on our star. In Khanty-Mansiysk, Magnus played for a win in every game, getting unbalanced positions from every opening, but sometimes your head just doesn't work right. Unfortunately, Magnus's first 'disaster' in a long time – if you can call a 2670 performance that – came while he was representing his country. Personally, I was convinced that he would strike back immediately and win Bilbao in style. However, after two consecutive losses in the first rounds, I was proven wrong. Magnus did recover in the second half, but not enough to put pressure on Kramnik, who made a brilliant tournament victory look easy in the end. However, for two of the players – Anand and Carlsen – there was no time to rest after Bilbao, as they would both play in Nanjing, China, just days later, which is where our story begins.

YU FENG

A few hours before our reporter will wake up in Cap d'Agde, France, the players in Nanjing have started their games.
In Round 7 Magnus Carlsen lost his perfect White score in the Pearl Spring tournament with a draw against World Champion Vishy Anand.

The Nanjing tournament has become one of the main tournaments of the year in record-time. I'm sure the headlines Magnus made with his incredible performance last year (8 out of 10 and a 3002 performance rating) helped, but when you host the likes of Topalov, Anand and Carlsen for a couple of days, your tournament is bound to be noticed and appreciated by fans all over the world anyway!

Chess tournaments at absolute top level are still quite rare in China. The Pearl Spring tournament is, like all high quality tournaments, a very welcome addition to the circuit, but it brings some unusual consequences in its wake! For American fans on the East Coast, the 2.30 am start surely meant that only the extremely dedicated followed the games live, while the 8.30 am CET start meant an unproductive morn-

who makes chess look easy

ing for many companies all over Europe. During Nanjing, I spent most of my time in the French coastal town of Cap d'Agde, trying to best my competitors in the bi-annual rapid tournament held there. The schedule of the Nanjing games worked brilliantly for me, since when I woke up at 10-ish, I had three top-level games as motivation to open my eyes. In turn, I could prepare for my own games inspired by the ideas shown in Nanjing. A great way to start your day!

We are living in the information age and following the top players is more than just fun. For many players, such as myself, checking the top-level games could prove decisive in one of your own games that very same day. Both at lunch and at dinner, the games and results in Nanjing were among the hottest topics for discussion. For me – as a newbie on the international circuit – it was very interesting to hear other people's thoughts on, for example, the endgame in Bacrot-Anand. It seemed strange to exchange rooks so quickly, but I assume Anand didn't want to be tortured for a prolonged period with the rooks on the board, and therefore went for what seemed like a draw. However, it's a committal decision, and going into it he should have been absolutely certain about the assessment. When the game was brought up at a dinner conversation, it was suggested that such an endgame would have been a logical one to study when you went for this bishop sacrifice in the Slav opening! It is certainly a valid point, but one that still dazzles me. Preparation is not only about checking opening lines with the computer – it's so, so much more!

Here is what Bacrot himself has to say about his win against the World Champion.

NOTES BY

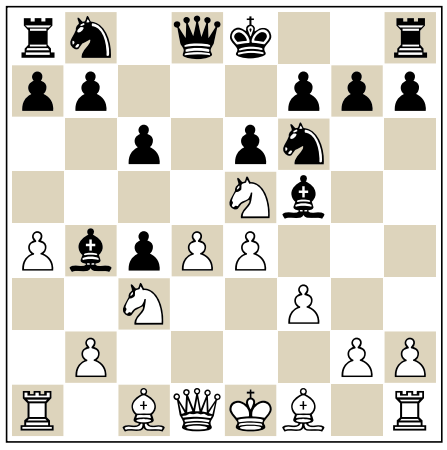
Etienne Bacrot

SL 4.4 – D17
Etienne Bacrot
Vishy Anand
Nanjing 2010 (4)

In the first two games in Nanjing I faced difficult openings and was lucky to get half a point. Then, after winning my next three games, including this game in Round 4 against Anand, I felt that everything was going my way. In Round 6, I faced the leader, Magnus Carlsen. I outprepared him and got a much better endgame in which I miscalculated at two points and let him escape with a draw.

The seventh game, against Topalov, went even worse. Facing an unpleasant novelty I managed to solve all problems after mistakes from both sides, but in slight time-trouble I blundered horribly and lost the game and my good mood. Two fast draws followed and then another miscalculation against the World Champion in a difficult but playable position. And so I finished my tournament with (for me) an excellent third place, but things could have even been better if I had not had such problems in the second half of the tournament.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 dxc4 5.a4 ♗f5 6.♘e5 e6 7.f3 ♗b4 8.e4



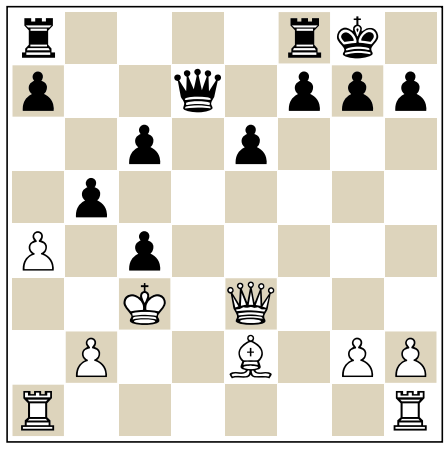
8...♗xe4 I had prepared this rare variation because it creates chances for both sides, with an unusual material balance.

9.fxe4

The counter-sacrifice 9.♘xf7, as recently played by Kasimdzhanov, my opponent's second, only leads to equality.

9...♘xe4 10.♗d2 ♕xd4 11.♘xe4 ♕xe4+ 12.♕e2 ♗xd2+ 13.♔xd2 ♕d5+ 14.♔c3!? Here 14.♔c2 is much more popular.

14...0-0 15.♕e3 b5 16.♗e2 ♘d7 17.♘xd7 ♕xd7



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'From a boffo televised opening ceremony to the €250,000 prize fund, the Chinese have a knack for spectacle.'

18.♖hd1

A novelty. The theoretical move is 18.♕c5, as played by Grischuk against Vallejo in Linares last year.

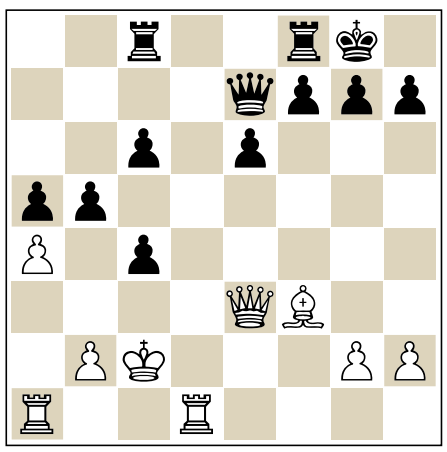
18...♕e7

The Carqueiranne (the place where Etienne Bacrot lives – ed.) team thinks that 18...♕c7 is more precise, but I will not enter into the details of my preparation.

19.♔c2 a5

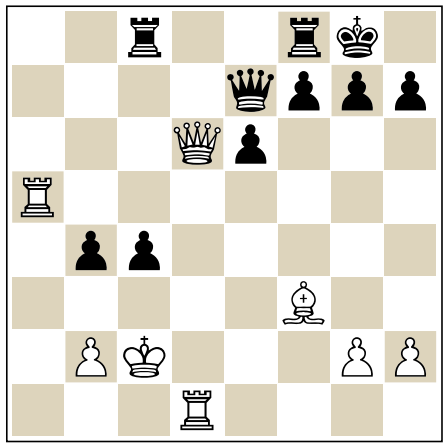
The logical move. Pawn a7 was attacked indirectly.

20.♗f3 ♖ac8? I think that even in case of the best defence, 20...♖ab8, White is better.



21.♕e5?

This is a real mistake. I should have played the more direct 21.axb5! cxb5 22.♖xa5 b4 (if 22...c3 23.b3 b4 24.♕a7 ♖c7 25.♕d4, followed by ♕d6, with a winning endgame) 23.♕g5 ♕c7 24.♕e5 ♕e7 25.♕d6, and Black has a big problem.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

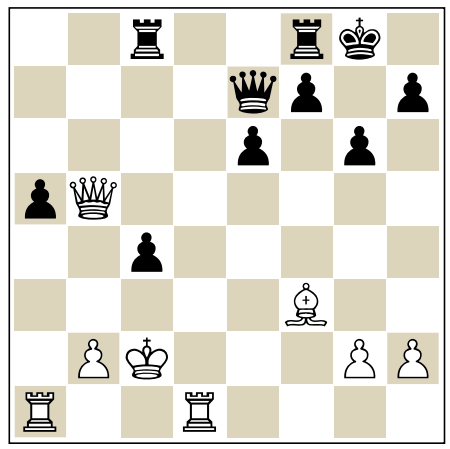
If the queens disappear, he cannot exchange his two queenside pawns against b2. And if 25...b3+ 26.♔c3 ♕h4 27.♖c5 the pawns on c4 and b3 will soon fall.

21...g6

The alternative is 21...♕b4 22.♕c3 ♕c5 23.axb5 cxb5 24.♖xa5 ♖fd8 25.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 26.♔b1 ♖b8 27.♔a2, when White has a slight advantage.

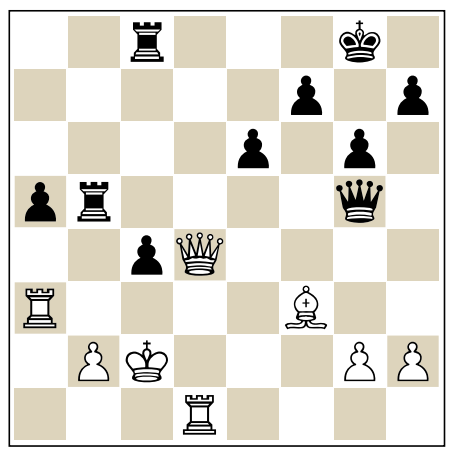
22.axb5 cxb5 23.♕xb5

Now Black has good counterplay along the b-file. Taking the other pawn looked even riskier to me: 23.♖xa5 c3! 24.b3 ♖fd8.



23...♖c5 24.♕d7 24.♕b6 is met by 24...♕g5, followed by ...♖b5.

24...♕g5 25.♕d4 ♖fc8 25...♖b8! seems to gain a tempo compared to the game. In case of 26.♖a4, 26...♖cb5 equalizes: 27.♖xc4 ♖xb2+ 28.♕xb2 ♖xb2+ 29.♔xb2 ♕b5+ 30.♔c3 a4. **26.♖a3 ♖b5**



27.♖d2

A Knack for Spectacle

(but not to be watched by everyone)

Macauley Peterson

Visiting China, one cannot escape the impression that when the Chinese decide to do something, whether it be building skyscrapers or organizing the Olympics, they go BIG.

The Nanjing Pearl Spring tournament is no exception. Now in its third year, Nanjing has moved from chess dilettante to Grand Slam powerhouse faster than you can say 国际象棋新鲜事 [1].

From a boffo televised opening ceremony to the €250,000 prize fund, the Chinese have a knack for spectacle. Who can forget the striking red Chinese suit in which Magnus Carlsen won the 2009 edition with a 3002 performance?

Actually, the absence of custom suits was one of the few major differences between the 2010 edition and the prior two years. The organizing committee opted to let the players wear their own semi-formal attire. This must surely have pleased Carlsen's sponsor Arctic Securities, who supplied the shirt and jacket he wore to each round.

The tournament was again a Category 21 affair, creeping up in average Elo to 2766 with the notable addition of World Champion Anand.

The Chinese have already gained a great deal of experience, but mirroring their industrial manufacturing prowess, they also bring to bear tremendous human resources to the organization of the Pearl Spring tournament. No less than forty-five people participated in the preparation and execution of this year's event, over the course of roughly two months.

Leading the charge are Tian Hongwei, Dong Wei, and GM Ye Jiangchuan, who coordinate and organize the army of staff and volunteers who make the tournament run smoothly.

Ms. Tian is the representative from the Chinese Chess Association, whose official title is the rather imposing Deputy Director General of Foreign Affairs Department, Chinese Chess Association, Chess & Cards Administration Center, General Administration of Sport of China. She connects with players, arbiters and other international participants, and represents the tournament at Grand Slam Chess Association meetings, along with Mr. Dong, the Vice-Director of the Pukou district for Media and Publicity. Ye Jiangchuan became China's third grandmaster in 1993, and coaches the national team.

For Mr. Dong's subordinates, the Pearl Spring tournament is a temporary assignment, and part of their regular governmental duties. Most of them were responsible for preparation, and never set foot at the tournament venue.

They were divided into specific teams: Reception, Documents, Coordination (of all the teams and relations between government and tournament), Events (Opening and Closing ceremonies), Comprehensive Security, and Tournament.

The Tournament team included all the people at the venue, such as the translators and press liaisons. Within the Events team, a group was responsible for organizing the massive opening day extravaganza, dubbed a 'Chess Cultural Exchange Festival'. This spectacular display of pomp and circumstance, set outside a primary school with hundreds of students in attendance, featured simuls by all the players except Magnus Carlsen, who declined to participate in the event, as it was not required by the tournament contract (and because the activities on the opening day, of which the players had not been told before, lasted for about eight hours – ed.).

MACAULEY PETERSON

Transcribing the analysis of WGM Gu Xiaobing and GM Zhao Jun for the tournament website, the translators were busy till late at night.

There was no fixed number of workers on any of the organizational teams, and so members would move between them as needed. Some teams were supplemented by student interns who volunteered a considerable amount of time, despite their ongoing university studies. These ten students, typically English ▸

[1] 'New In Chess'

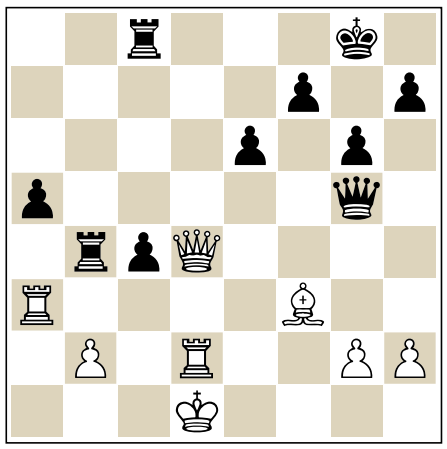
I wanted to transfer my king. Keeping it on the queenside leads to an uncertain position.
27.♔b1 is met by 27...♖b3! 28.♖xb3 cxb3, with an unclear situation.

27...♖b4

The computer indicates a forced draw after the tricky move 27...e5! 28.♕c3 (a blunder is 28.♕e3?? c3! 29.♕xg5 cxb2+, and Black wins) 28...♖b3 29.♕xa5 c3 30.bxc3 ♖b2+! 31.♔xb2 ♕xd2+ 32.♔b3 ♖b8+ 33.♔c4 ♖c8+ 34.♔b3 ♖b8+, with a draw.

28.♔d1

More interesting than 28.♕c3 ♖b3! 29.♕xa5 ♖b5 30.♕c3 ♖b3 31.♕a5 (after 31.♕d4 ♕b5 32.♖a2 ♖d3! Black is attacking) 31...♖b5, with move repetition.



28...♖cb8

Wrong was 28...c3? in view of 29.♖xc3 ♖xd4 30.♖xc8, with check! However, 28...♖b3 29.♖xb3 cxb3 30.♕a4 ♕c5 31.♕xb3 ♕g1+ 32.♔e2 ♕xh2 was slightly better for White.

29.♔e2

After 29.♔e1 ♖xb2! 30.♖xb2 ♕c1+ 31.♗d1 ♕xb2 32.♕xb2 ♖xb2 Black obtains an improved version of the game.

29...♕b5 30.♔e1 ♖xb2

This exchange leads to a draw. There is nothing more Black can hope for.

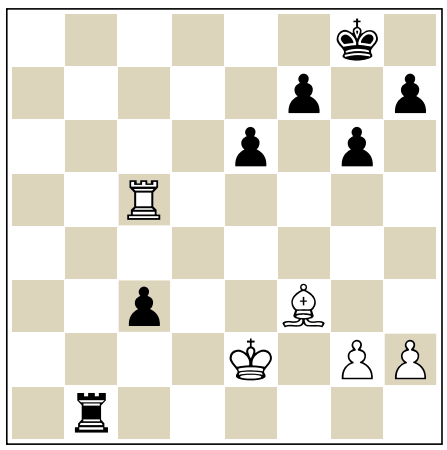
31.♖xb2 ♕xb2 32.♕xb2 ♖xb2 33.♖xa5 c3 34.♖c5 ♖b1+ 35.♔e2

The c-pawn is lost and Black has to choose his line of defence. There is no theory on this end-

YU FENG

Etienne Bacrot defeated World Champion Vishy Anand and finished third, but things could even have been better if he had not had such problems in the second half.

game, but I think that by keeping the rooks on the board Black will have an easy draw.

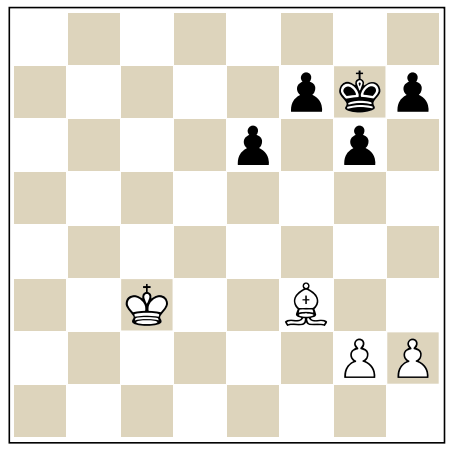


35...♖c1?!

If Anand wanted to exchange the rooks, he should first have created a weakness, for example 35...♖h1! 36.h3 ♖c1 37.♔d3 ♔g7 38.♖xc3 ♖xc3+ 39.♔xc3 f5 40.♔d4 ♔f6 41.♗e2 h5 42.♗d1 h4 43.♗e2 g5! 44.♗d1 g4! 45.hxg4 ♔g5 46.gxf5 exf5 47.♔e3 f4+ 48.♔f3 h3!, and Black gets the well-known draw of bishop and h-pawn of the wrong colour.

36.♔d3 ♔g7 37.♖xc3 ♖xc3+?!

38.♔xc3



During the game I thought this ending to be winning for me. I believe I had already lost it once on the black side in a rapid game.

38...f5 39.♔d4 ♔f6 40.♗d1

The king is on the ideal square, but my pawns shouldn't move, as the exchange of the entire black armada against only my g-pawn would lead to a draw, and the bishop has no better diagonal to wait on. E.g. 40.♗b7 h5 41.♗a6 h4 42.♗c8 e5+ 43.♔d5 e4 44.♔d4 ♔g5 45.♔e5 h3 46.g3 ♔g4, with a draw, as the king infiltrates.

majors, were a constant presence whenever any international communication was required.

As is common in China, many of the volunteers had adopted an 'English name' in school, which they often used while in international company. For instance, Xia Qiuqi, or 'Summer' as she was known to foreigners, was a member of the Reception team, whose tasks included meeting the players at the airport, and administering one of the two entrances to the playing hall. The latter was a thankless task that included, among other things, guarding a bin of cell phones, which were forbidden from the playing hall and therefore collected from what few spectators visited the venue. Fewer than ten chess fans came per day, according to Summer, perhaps a bit more on the weekend. All spectators (except for children) had their identification photocopied before entering the hall. 'We have some records and copy their ID card and other cards to make sure they're not some terrorist', she explained.

MACAULEY PETERSON

Dong Wei flanked by part of the army of staff and volunteers who made the tournament run smoothly.

Those fans that did make the roughly 30 kilometre trip from downtown Nanjing were quite enthusiastic about the experience, and fortunately for them, their relative paucity made it easy to get autographs from the players, who were even willing to pose for pictures.

The student volunteers were interviewed for their posts in September, and the chosen few started with several hours of training, including tips on 'make-up and etiquette'. They considered the internships prestigious, despite receiving no school credit for the work, and requiring special dispensation from their professors and the university administration to be able to participate.

Most of the volunteers acted as translators in various capacities. A small group of three translated the daily reports from Chinese into English to produce the daily bulletin – or 'Event Profile', as they called it. Other translators were stationed in the commentary room, to transcribe the analysis of WGM Gu Xiaobing and GM Zhao Jun for the tournament website. Although the commentary room (where the daily press conference was also held) could accommodate several dozen spectators, it unfortunately remained virtually empty, save for the tournament staff.

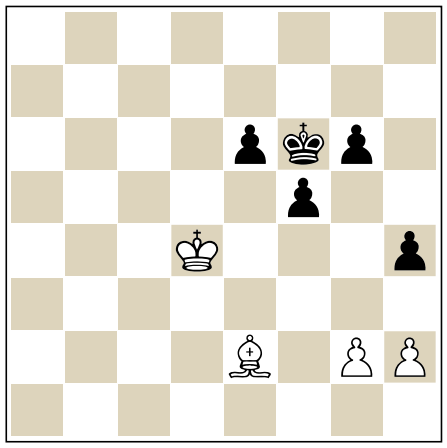
Of course the absence of spectators at the venue is by no means an indication of the *international* interest, as the Internet is where the real crowds are to be found these days. According to the organizers, 86 Chinese websites and 60 foreign sites were linking to www.chess-pearlspring.com, which featured information and text commentary in both Chinese and English. The tournament logged some 60,000 viewers of live games.

The tournament website included round-by-round videos by Peter Doggers and I, which have been viewed 25,000 times on ChessVibes.com. Regrettably, several video streaming services, such as YouTube and Blip.tv (which ChessVibes uses), are often either partially or totally unavailable in China, due to national Internet restrictions, so the viewership within the country was muted. ChessVibes.com itself was nearly unusable owing to the presence of modules that connect to Facebook and Twitter, both of which are 'forbidden' -- the term used by several Chinese with whom I discussed the matter. Various technical tricks to circumvent these obstacles were required even to post a round report.

Obviously these shortcomings are in no way the fault of the organizers, and lie beyond their control. But for an event whose *raison d'être* is 'cultural exchange between East and West', and motivated by the desire to provide a window from Nanjing to the world – as we were repeatedly reminded – it is at the very least a bit ironic that mainstream international conduits for communication are off limits to most of the population.

Professionalism and class were clearly on display in Nanjing. One gets the sense that everyone who works on the tournament is proud to be there and proud of its success. Like everything else in China, the tournament is well positioned for growth.

40...h5 41.♗f3 h4 42.♗e2

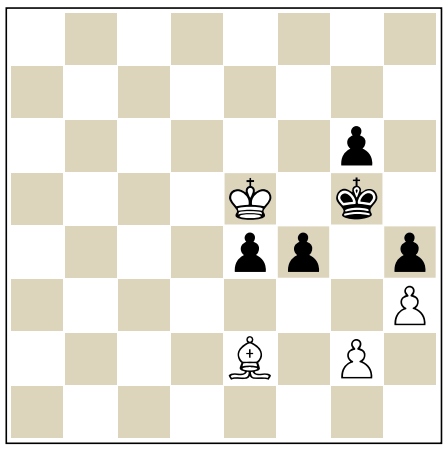


42...g5??

This move blocks the road for the king to the white pawns.

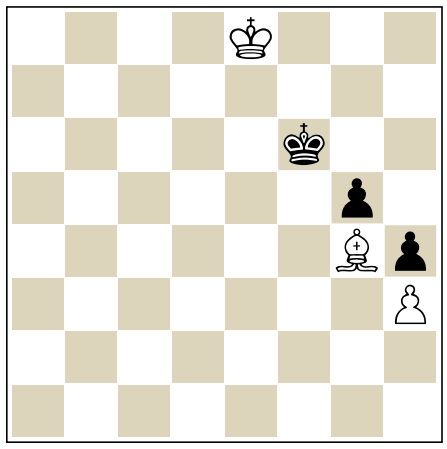
Playing for stalemate doesn't work either: 42...h3?? 43.g3 f4 44.g4 ♔g5 45.♔e5 ♔h4 46.♔xf4 g5+ 47.♔f3 e5 48.♗b5 e4+ 49.♔xe4 ♔xg4 50.♗e8 ♔h4 51.♔f3 g4+ 52.♔f4 g3 53.hxg3 mate.

But 42...e5+!! draws, as by a miracle: 43.♔d5 e4 44.♔d4 ♔g5! 45.♔e5 f4 46.h3 (46.♔xe4?! h3 47.g3 – 47.gxh3 f3, and Black puts the pawn on g5 and the king in the corner, with a draw – 47...fxg3 48.hxg3 h2 49.♗f3 h1♗ 50.♗xh1 ♔g4).



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

I thought this was winning, but I had missed a tempo in the variation 46...f3 47.gxf3 (47.♗xf3 exf3 48.gxf3 ♔h6, with indirect opposition and a draw) 47...exf3 48.♗xf3 ♔h6 49.♔f6 ♔h7 50.♔f7 ♔h8 (for the moment I have to keep the king on h7-h8 and the pawn on g6) 51.♗d5 ♔h7 52.♗c4 ♔h8 53.♔f8 ♔h7 54.♗e6 ♔h6! (in the right moment!) 55.♔g8 g5 56.♗g4 (if 56.♔f7 g4!! 57.♗xg4 – 57.hxg4 ♔g5 with a draw – 57...♔h7!!, with a theoretical draw) 56...♔g6 57.♔f8 ♔f6 58.♔e8



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

58...♔e5!! 59.♔e7 ♔d5 60.♗e6+ ♔c5 61.♗a2 ♔c6 – I think this is a draw, as you cannot stalemate the opposite king to force the advance of the g-pawn.

43.♗a6!

A change of diagonal! One has to remain precise. If 43.♗f3? then 43...e5+ 44.♔d5 e4 45.♗e2 g4 46.♗xg4 fxg4 47.♔xe4 g3 48.h3 ♔e6 49.♔f4 ♔d5 50.♔g4 ♔e4 51.♔xh4 ♔f4!, with a draw.

43...g4 44.♗b7

Black is defenceless. I will indicate some other tries, but the bishop always dominates the pawns.

44...e5+ Or 44...h3 45.g3 e5+ 46.♔e3 f4+ 47.♔e4 fxg3 48.hxg3 h2 49.♔e3 and wins. Or 44...f4 45.♗e4 f3 46.g3, and wins.

45.♔d5 f4 Or 45...e4 46.♔d4 ♔g6 47.♔e3 ♔g5 48.g3, and wins.

46.♔e4 Black resigned.

I must tell you: we were treated to some amazing food in Cap d'Agde, but even so it wasn't always my main priority. While intensively following Magnus on his way to beating Anand and keeping his perfect score as White, I suddenly noticed that the canteen would close in 10 minutes. Confident that Magnus would still need some time to convert, I hurried to the canteen – hoping to be back in time to see Magnus add the finishing touches to his performance. However, by the time I got back, Anand had managed to trick him. As a result, Magnus had to content himself with a draw against the World Champion, while superstitious me was left with a feeling of how Maggie would have won if I had only skipped lunch to cheer him on!

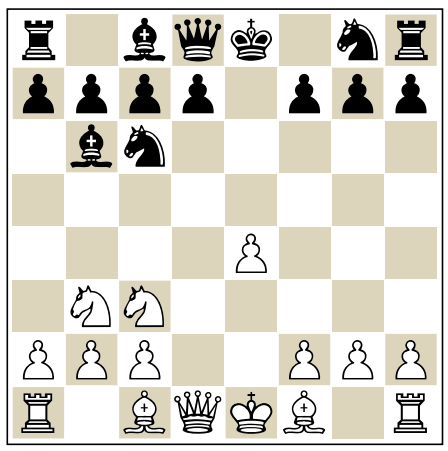
The first three days really set the tone for the tournament. Magnus kept his amazing 100% white score from last year. He got off to the best possible start by beating Bacrot and Wang Yue with white, while holding the World Champion to a draw with the black pieces. Against Anand he used his 'regular' Breyer. I say 'regular' because any opening Magnus plays more than twice in a row qualifies as regular – for him!

As said, in his first game Magnus just continued where he left off last year.

SO 5.8 – C45
Magnus Carlsen
Etienne Bacrot
Nanjing 2010 (1)

The first game of a tournament is always very important. Often you're not settled yet in the new place, and you need a round just to get your game face on. But of course, there are some people who use an alternative strategy: they just win!

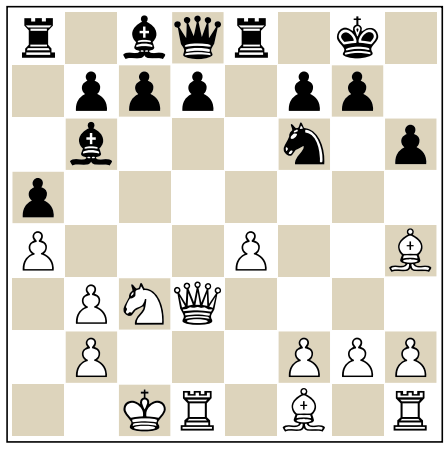
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♗c5 5.♘b3 ♗b6 6.♘c3



Magnus played this variation repeatedly when he won the 2009 World Blitz Championship in Moscow, with very good results.

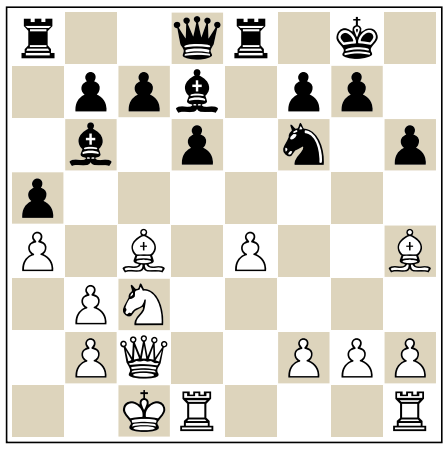
6...♘f6 7.♕e2 0-0 8.♗g5 h6 9.♗h4 White wants to keep the star player of his strategy. This bishop will prove a big nuisance for Black, and he will have to make some sort of concession to push it back. Also, with the move ...h6 inserted, White might have an option to go f3-g4 at an opportune moment.

9...a5 10.a4 ♘d4 11.♕d3 ♘xb3 12.cxb3 ♖e8 13.0-0-0



Black decides to exchange some pieces, thereby getting the option of playing ...c6 to cover the d5-square. But the pin on the last remaining black knight is still giving Black headaches, something which was reflected on the clock: Magnus was playing very quickly, whereas Etienne was taking lots of time to decide on a plan of action.

13...d6 14.♕c2 ♗d7 15.♗c4



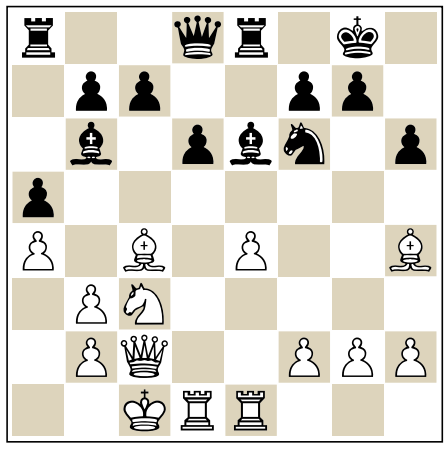
White has a very harmonious set-up, and Black has no counterplay.

A triumph for Magnus's opening!

15...♗e6

Etienne decides to go against opening principles in order to relieve some pressure. However, Magnus's aggressive play enables him to increase it nevertheless!

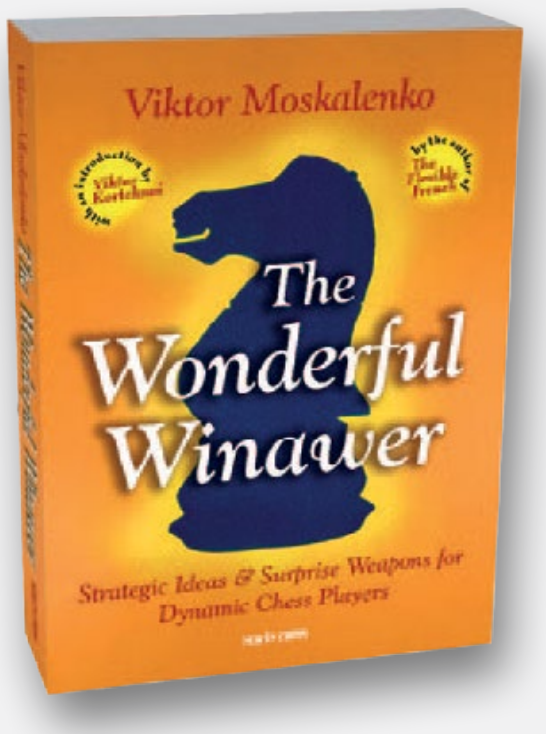
16.♖he1



Centralizing. Sometimes chess is so simple!

16...♕e7 17.e5 dxe5 18.♖xe5 ♕f8 19.♗xf6 gxf6 20.♖e2

Ruined pawns, a draughty king and no counterplay. I bet Etienne



"Familiarizing oneself with Moskalenko's new ideas can only have a beneficial effect on the play of any reader, from amateur to professional. I can see many connections between this second book and the earlier 'flexible' volume, which proves that the two are in spirit actually one publication."
Viktor Kortchnoi

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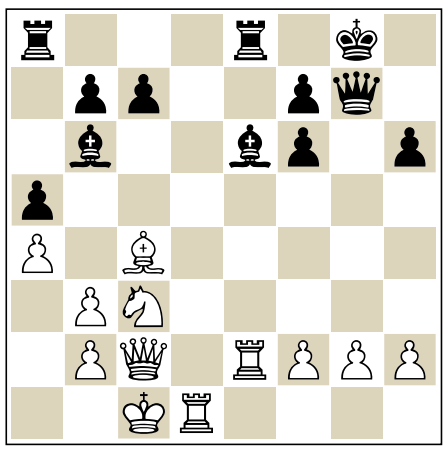
YU FENG

No Chinese suit this time. Magnus Carlsen felt equally comfortable in his sponsors' jacket, winning the Pearl Spring tournament for the second time.

was mumbling something about the wrong foot this morning!

20...♕g7

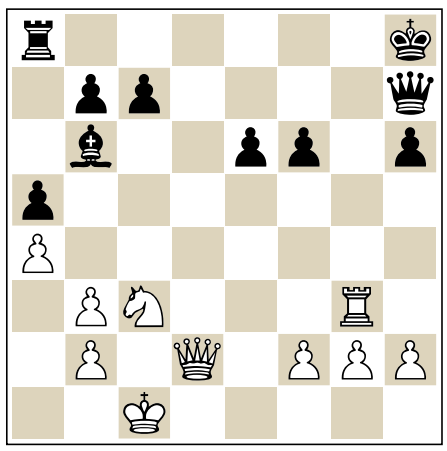


21.♗xe6 A key to chess mastery: swapping advantages. Magnus goes from a positionally very superior position to attacking mode against Black's very uncomfortable king.

21...♖xe6 22.♖xe6 fxe6 23.♖d3

Once again: it's so simple!

23...♔h8 24.♖g3 ♕h7 25.♕d2



Keeping an eye on h6 in order to have tactics involving the h6 pawn. Black does his best to fight on, but his position is beyond salvation!

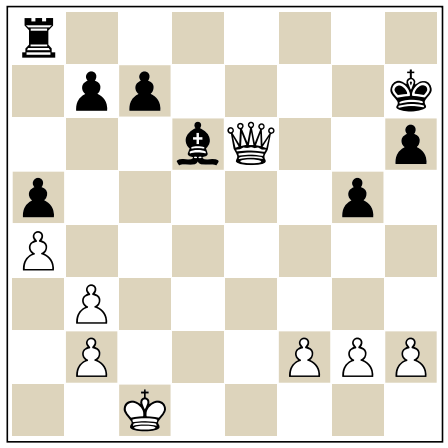
25...♗c5 26.♘e4 ♗e7 27.♖h3

The h6 pawn is getting hammered! No pun intended.

27...♔g7

The final mistake. Magnus is merciless in his finish:

28.♕d7 ♔f7 29.♘g5+! fxg5 30.♖f3+ ♔g8 31.♕xe6+ ♔h8 32.♖f7 ♗d6 33.♖xh7+ ♔xh7



All that remains is to stop Black from getting some sort of fortress. But it must be said that this is a very important detail!

34.♕f7+ ♔h8 35.g3

My compatriot decides that the f-pawn to f6 is what it takes to win the game. Black is completely tied up then.

35...♖a6 36.♔b1 ♗b4 37.f4 gxf4 38.gxf4

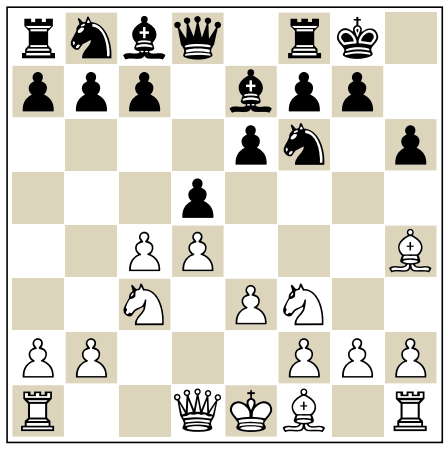
There's nothing stopping White from pushing the pawn to f6, so Black resigned. A great victory for Magnus, and an excellent way to start the race for a repeat performance!

After three rounds Magnus had a half-point lead. The third round was the ultimate fighting round, as all games were decided! Lots of attention was given to the first Topalov-Anand game since the world championship match in Sofia earlier this year, and both clearly had ambitions to give their best in this 'reunion'. Anand was left with the best memories, as he once again took Topalov down in the Lasker Variation of the QGD. That same opening helped Anand to win the last game of their match, and to retain his title!

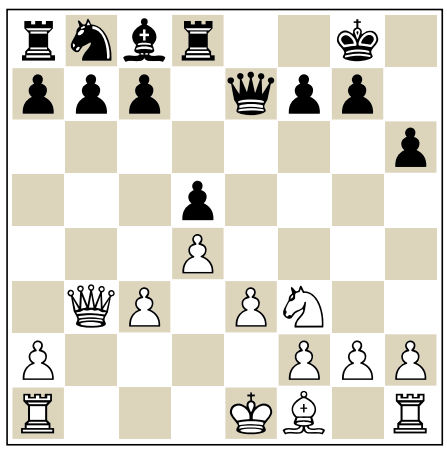
NOTES BY
Vishy Anand

QO 14.10 – D57
Veselin Topalov
Vishy Anand
Nanjing 2010 (3)

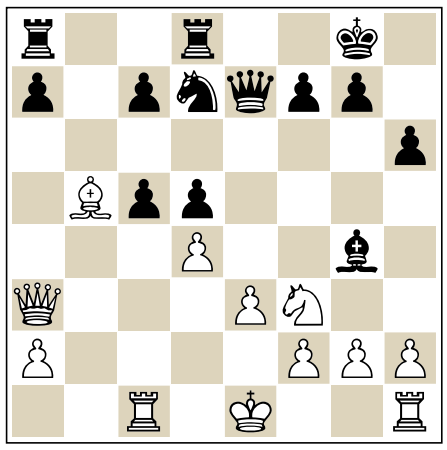
Our first game since the match. I wasn't sure what he would go for.
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗e7 5.♗g5 h6 6.♗h4 0-0 7.e3



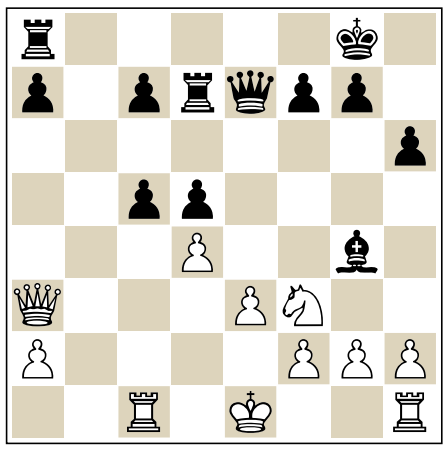
7...♘e4 Continuing from Game 12 in Sofia.
8.♗xe7 ♕xe7 9.cxd5
In Sofia and also at the Olympiad (against Nakamura, which game ended in a draw –ed.), he went for 9.♖c1.
9...♘xc3 10.bxc3 exd5 11.♕b3 ♖d8



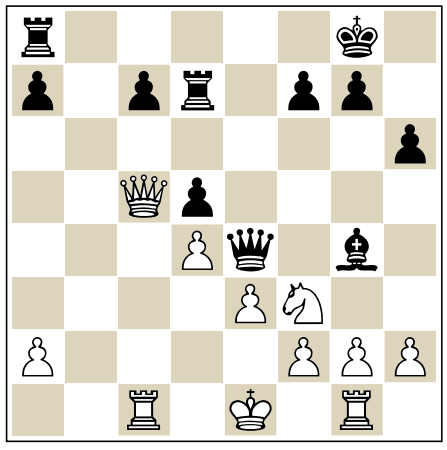
12.c4
Ivanchuk beat Yakovenko recently with this move, so I guess it's kind of topical.
12...♗e6 13.c5 b6 14.♖c1 bxc5 15.♕a3
15.♖xc5 ♘d7 16.♖xc7 ♖db8, and Black has good compensation.
15...♘d7 16.♗b5 ♗g4!



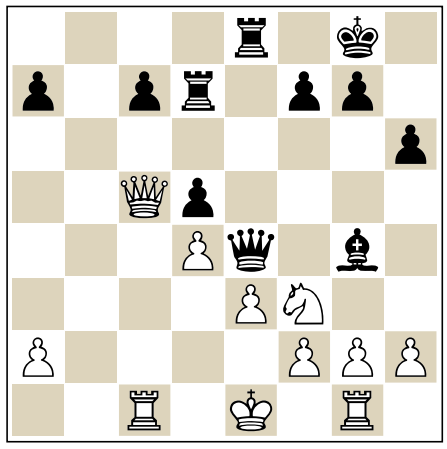
The point of Black's play.
17.♗xd7 After 17.♘d2 c6 18.♗xc6 ♖ac8! 19.♗xd7 cxd4 20.♖xc8 ♖xc8 21.♗xc8 ♕xa3 22.♗xg4 dxe3 Black is clearly better.
17...♖xd7 This works tactically.



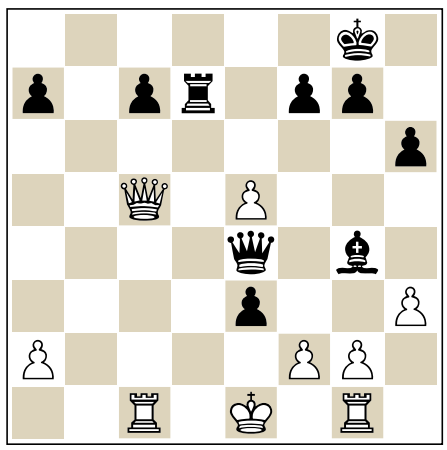
18.♕xc5
After 18.♖xc5 ♕e4 19.♔e2 ♖e8 (19...♖d6 20.h3 ♗c8 is harder to find, but either way Black is better: 21.♖hc1 ♗a6+ 22.♔d1 ♕g6) 20.♖hc1 ♖d6 21.h3 ♗xf3+ 22.gxf3 ♕xd4 Black is better.
The same goes for 18.♘e5 cxd4 19.♕xe7 ♖xe7 20.♘c6 (20.♘xg4 h5 traps the knight) 20...♖e6 21.h3 ♗h5 22.♘xd4 ♖a6 23.♖xc7 ♖xa2 24.0-0 a5.
18...♕e4 19.♖g1



This move caught me by surprise, but it doesn't really improve White's position.
19...♖e8
This move implies an exchange sac, but it felt very promising.
After 19...♗xf3 20.gxf3 ♕xf3 21.♕c6 ♖b8! 22.♕xh6 g6 23.♕f4 (23.♖g3 ♕h1+ 24.♔d2 ♖b2+ 25.♖c2 ♖xc2+ 26.♔xc2 ♖d6! winning) 23...♕xf4 24.exf4 the comp really likes Black's position, but I am not sure that he has much of an edge.
I thought that 19...f6 20.♕c2 ♗xf3 21.gxf3 ♕xf3 22.♖g3 ♕e4 23.♕xe4 dxe4 offered too small an edge: 24.♖g4 ♖e8 25.♖f4, and White's rook escapes to the queenside.



20.♕b5 Obviously, White cannot take the exchange: 20.♘e5 ♖xe5 21.dxe5 d4 (here his problem is that his king is stuck in the centre, and his rook on g1 is unable to do much. Black will play ...♖d5 next) 22.h3 (trying to kick the bishop away – 22.♕b4 ♕xe5 23.h3 c5 24.♕xc5 d3!) 22...dxe3! (even 22...♗e6 is possible), and now:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

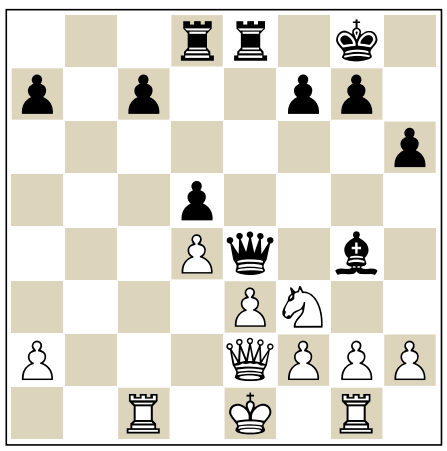
A) 23.♕xe3 ♕b4+ 24.♔f1 ♕b5+ 25.♔e1 ♖d3 26.♕xd3 (after 26.hxg4 ♖xe3+ 27.fxe3 ♕a5+ 28.♔f2 ♕xa2+ 29.♔f3 ♕d5+ 30.♔f2 ♕xe5 should be very unpleasant for White and 26.♕e4 loses to 26...♕b2) 26...♕xd3 27.hxg4 c5 should be winning for Black;

B) 23.fxe3 ♖d3 24.♔f2 ♗xh3! (stronger than 24...♖d2+ 25.♔g3 ♗e6, with only an edge for Black) 25.gxh3 ♖d2+ 26.♔g3 h5!, and wins;

C) 23.hxg4 exf2+ 24.♔xf2 ♕f4+ 25.♔e1 ♖d4 26.♕c3 ♖e4+ 27.♔d1 ♕f2 28.♖e1 ♖d4+ 29.♕xd4 ♕xd4+. Here, with the loose pawns and an exposed king, the queen must be stronger than the two rooks.

Finally, 20.♔e2 is strongly met by 20...f5!.

20...♖dd8 21.♕e2



21...♖b8

As soon as I made this move, I was annoyed I hadn't gone for 21...c5. However, it seems that ...♖b8 is by no means worse.

After 21...c5 22.h3 ♗xf3 23.gxf3 ♕f5 White has 24.dxc5! (indeed, after 24.♖xc5 ♖b8! 25.♖c1 ♖ec8 Black is winning) 24...d4 25.♖g3, and it seems that White is holding: 25...d3 26.♕d2 ♖e5 27.e4.

22.h3 ♗xf3 23.gxf3

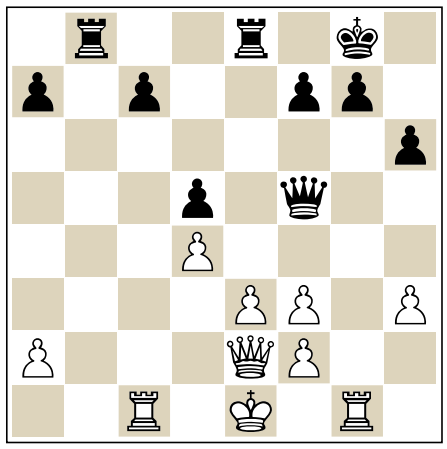
In case of 23.♕xf3 ♕xd4, and Black wins.

23...♕f5

The problem for White is that his king still can't get to safety.

YU FENG

One of the highlights of the opening day extravaganza dubbed a 'Chess Cultural Exchange Festival' was a simul by Vishy Anand.



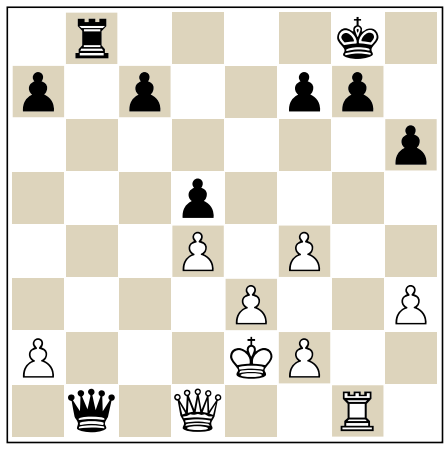
24.f4

After 24.♖g3 ♖b1 25.♖xb1 (if 25.♔d1 ♖xc1+ 26.♔xc1 ♖b8 27.♕c2 ♕e6 and wins) 25...♕xb1+ 26.♕d1 ♕xa2 27.♔f1 ♖b8 28.♔g2 ♖b2 29.♕f1 ♕c4! (29...a5 30.♕a6!) seems to clinch it.

24...♖b1 25.♖xb1

After 25.♕d1 ♖eb8 26.♔d2 ♖8b2+ 27.♔c3 ♖xc1+ 28.♕xc1 ♖b6! (28...♖xf2 29.♖xg7+! ♔xg7 30.♕g1+ ♔f8 31.♕xf2 ♕xh3 32.f5 is too messy) 29.♔d2 ♕xh3 Black can slowly advance his h-pawn whilst harassing White's king.

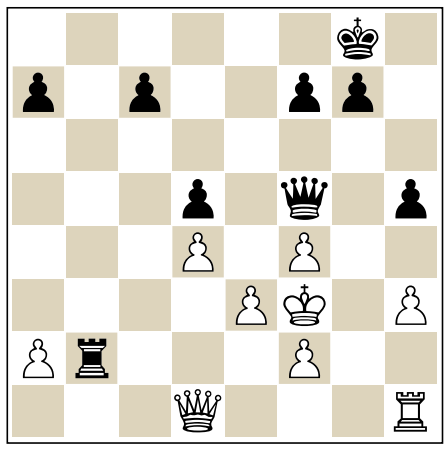
25...♕xb1+ 26.♕d1 ♖b8 27.♔e2



27...♕f5! Not allowing White's king to get to safety.

After 27...♖b2+ 28.♔f3 ♕xa2 29.♕f1 Black is still better, but White's king is safe.

28.♖h1 ♖b2+ 29.♔f3 h5!



The key move; now it's over.

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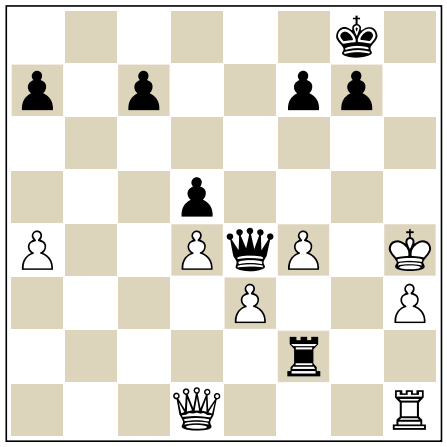
30.a4 Or 30.♖h2 h4! 31.♔g2 ♖b1, and Black wins.
30...♕e4+ 31.♔g3 h4+ 32.♔xh4 ♖xf2

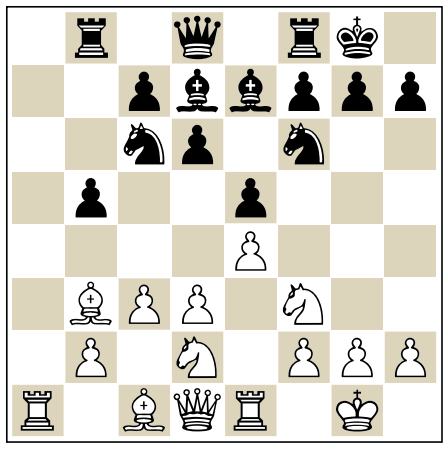


33.♕g4 Or 33.♖g1 ♕xe3 34.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 35.♕g4+ ♔f8 36.♕c8+ ♕e8 and wins.
33...♖g2
33...♕e7+ 34.♕g5 ♕xe3 wins as well. White resigned.

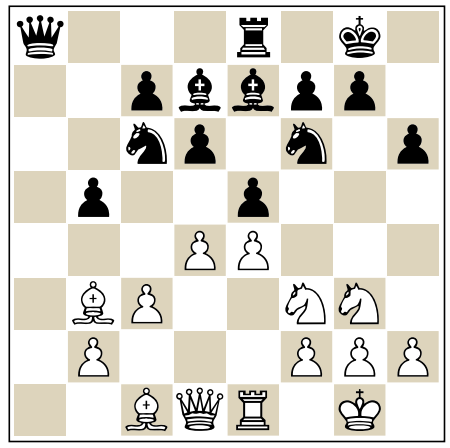
At the halfway mark, Magnus had kept his half-point lead, but his main competitor had changed. The tournament surprise Etienne Bacrot made a comeback after his first-round loss, and after a great series of three straight wins, he was fighting for a top spot. Magnus continued his incredible white streak by beating Topalov seemingly effortlessly! By now, people – or at least I – thought he would comfortably win the tournament. He had only two games as White left to play, after all!

RL 13.5 – C84
Magnus Carlsen
Veselin Topalov
Nanjing 2010 (5)

Magnus has always had a good grip on Topalov. However, calling it an easy point is nowhere near the truth, although I must admit that he makes it look so easy!
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.d3
Magnus chooses a fairly slow system, but in his hands it is certainly not without venom! **6...b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.a4 ♖b8 9.axb5 axb5 10.♘bd2 0-0 11.♖e1 ♗d7 12.c3**



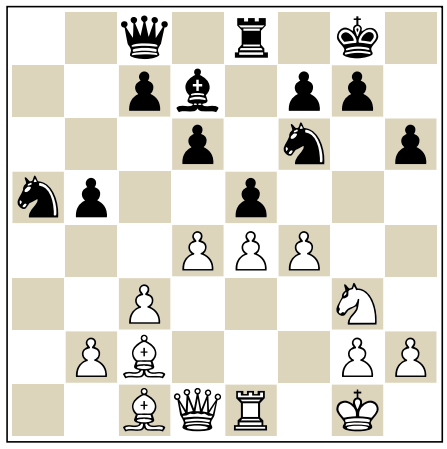
White is getting ready to push d4 without having to insert h3, and Black's pieces look rather clumsy. The bishops on d7 and e7 are not doing anything – not even protecting Black against pins. Such a setup can hardly be called aggressive, and this is not how we are used to see Topalov play. His game against Anand some days later was more reminiscent of his fearless play!
12...♖a8 13.♖xa8 ♕xa8 14.d4
Centralized pieces and a better centre. Sounds familiar? With simple means, Magnus has got Topalov out of his comfort zone and starts to apply pressure. Pretty much a repeat performance of his game against Bacrot!
14...h6 15.♘f1 ♖e8 16.♘g3



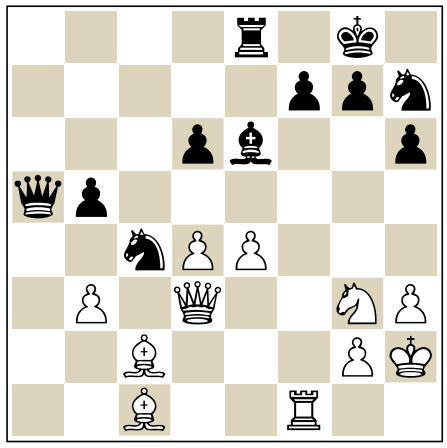
16...♕c8
Clearly a sign that something has gone wrong. Magnus takes this opportunity to remove Black's dark-squared bishop. It might not seem like the most important piece on the board, but it does a terrific job guarding Black's kingside. Without it, Black might (or when Magnus is White: will) get mated.
17.♘h4 ♗f8 18.♘g6 ♘a5 19.♘xf8 ♖xf8 20.♗c2 ♖e8 21.f4

YU FENG

'Such a setup can hardly be called aggressive, and this is not how we are used to see Topalov play.'



A bonus feature of grabbing the bishop: White is ready to increase the pressure with his f-pawn. Black is in serious trouble, and Topalov does his best to muddy the waters. **21...♗g4 22.♕d3 exf4 23.♗xf4 ♘c4 24.♗c1** White's coordination is simply beautiful, whereas Black's pieces are scattered all over the board. Magnus finished him off nicely. **24...c5 25.♖f1 cxd4 26.cxd4 ♕d8 27.h3 ♗e6 28.b3 ♕a5 29.♔h2 ♘h7**

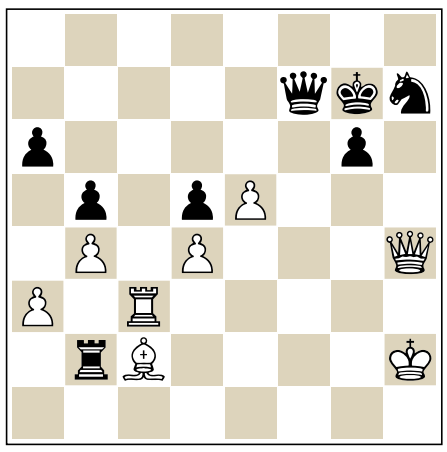


And now, for the final touch:
30.e5 g6 31.d5 ♘xe5 32.dxe6
A great finish and a game anyone would be ecstatic about!
The continuation 32...♘xd3 33.exf7+ ♔f8 34.♗xh6+ ♔e7 35.fxe8♕+ ♔xe8 36.♗xd3 leaves White with a big amount of pieces up. One can't help but wonder if Bacrot and Topalov's only mistake was getting up in the morning. An incredibly powerful display by Magnus!

The sixth round was a brilliant opportunity for Magnus to distance himself from the rest of the field. He was up against Bacrot, who had proved an easy match in their first encounter. However, Bacrot was in no mood to give up the fight for first prize. He played aggressively and got an excellent position. Against a lesser player, Etienne might have converted his advantage, but playing Magnus is not meant to be easy. The game ended in a draw, a result Magnus could be very happy about.

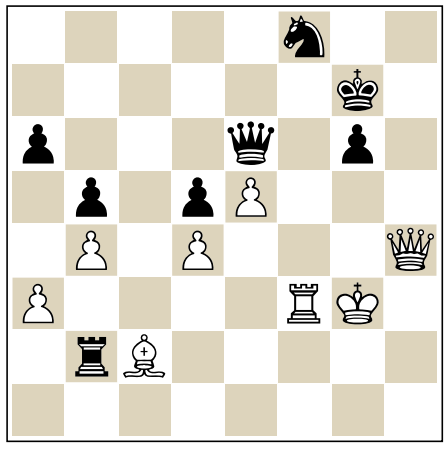
Playing Anand and Topalov is a challenge that would give me nightmares – though admittedly some butterflies as well. It must be said: when you have a friend who crushes the world's elite on a regular basis, you lose some of that fear. After seeing Magnus making a deserved 1½/2-score against these 2010 World Championship finalists, you start thinking, 'I could do that as well.' It might be a bit too optimistic, but when you have someone treading up the path for you, following seems so much easier. Also, it should be mentioned that Magnus managed this feat twice in Nanjing – in the first half and in the second!

Against Anand, Magnus gave away his first half-point with white in Nanjing. Unfortunate? Yes. But amazing statistics are meant to be broken. It wasn't for lack of trying, though.



Carlsen-Anand
Nanjing 2010 (7)
position after 60...♕f7

From a seemingly harmless position, Magnus managed to outplay the World Champion by the book, and only the finishing touches remain for him to claim the most prestigious scalp on the circuit. (At least for him, since Magnus can't beat himself!)
61.♔g3
White had an alternate solution here: 61.e6 ♕xe6 62.♖c7+ ♔f8 63.♕h6+!! (to leave the g7-square available for White's king. Not doing so would lead to an immediate draw: 63.♕xh7 ♕e2+ 64.♔g3 ♖b3+ 65.♗xb3 ♕e3+ 66.♔g4 ♕e4+ 67.♔g5 ♕f5+ 68.♔h4 ♕f4+) 63...♔e8 64.♕xh7 ♕e2+ 65.♔g3 ♕e3+ 66.♔g4 ♕xd4+ 67.♔g5 ♕g1+ 68.♔f6 ♕b6+ 69.♔e5 ♕e3+ 70.♔xd5 ♕d2+ 71.♔e6 ♕e3+ 72.♔f6 ♕b6+ 73.♔e5 ♕e3+ 74.♗e4, and the white king will find shelter on c6.
It is surely excusable to avoid such a difficult line. Time is better spent on other winning attempts! At a talk show in Norway, Magnus was asked how far he could see ahead. His explanation was surprisingly good, so much so that he surprised himself with his excellent answer. His metaphor was that you can proceed rapidly if you are following a single path, but when the paths diverge, finding the right way is very difficult and only possible after careful consideration. With the amount of different queen checks at Black's disposal, I think we can safely say that this path was more like a US freeway junction! Try navigating one of those things!
61...♘f8 62.♖f3 ♕e6



YU FENG

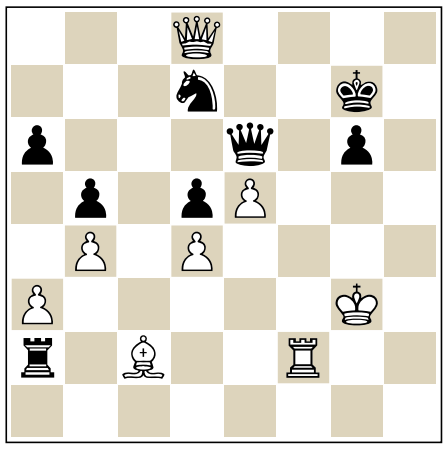
Enough to talk about. Vishy Anand and Veselin Topalov 'look at' alternatives after their exciting draw. To the right Spanish GM Ivan Salgado, Topalov's second in Nanjing.

63.♕d8 And now Magnus unfortunately missed a clear-cut win: 63.♖f6! ♕e8 64.♖f2 is the solution to White's problems to convert his advantage. The combined threats of ♕f6 and ♖h2 prove too tough a task for Black to cope with: 64...♖a2 65.♕f6+ ♔g8 66.♗b3 ♖xa3 67.♖f3 and wins.

63...♘d7

The Indian tiger fights on, and his perseverance is rewarded!

64.♖f2 ♖a2



Black managed to trick White, and has enough counterplay for a draw!

65.♔h2 ♕g4 66.♕e7+ ♔h6 67.♕d8 ♕h5+ 68.♔g2 ♕g4+

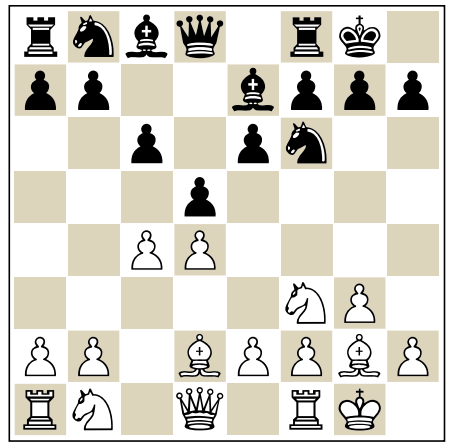
Vishy's continued resistance netted him a half point, while Magnus must have been very frustrated to ruin his statistic when he was so close to a win! Draw.

Topalov has had a very bad run recently, which probably affected his play. Magnus gradually managed to equalize and then exploited some inaccuracies to get some initiative in the endgame. When Veselin blundered one of the most important pawns in the position, he simply had to resign. One round earlier Topalov had played a game that was more typical of his style and class, a wild draw against Anand that must have been followed breathlessly by viewers around the world.

QI 1.3 – E10
Vishy Anand
Veselin Topalov
Nanjing 2010 (8)

Anand drew first blood against Topalov in Nanjing. In addition, Veselin was certainly eager to improve his score.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.g3 ♗b4+ 5.♗d2 ♗e7 6.♗g2 0-0 7.0-0 c6

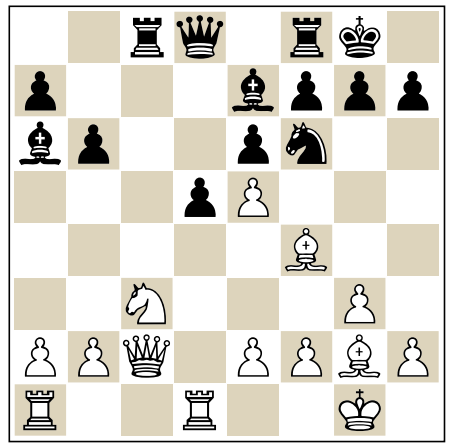


8.♕c2

This move is actually worth noting, as Anand played 8.♗f4 in their World Championship match. But with a spectacular rook sacrifice Topalov managed to create an extremely tense battle in which he had the upper hand: 8...dxc4 9.♘e5 b5 10.♘xc6 ♘xc6 11.♗xc6 ♗d7 12.♗xa8 ♕xa8, Anand-Topalov, seventh match game, Sofia 2010.

8...b6 9.♖d1 ♘bd7 10.♗f4 ♗a6 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.♘e5 ♘xe5 13.dxe5 ♖c8 14.♘c3

So far, the game has progressed along normal paths. A further normal continuation would be 14...♘d7 15.e4 d4 16.♖xd4 ♕c7 17.♖ad1 ♖fd8 18.h4, but this is very comfortable for White, and the most Black can hope for is a draw. Topalov had different plans!



14...♘g4!?

Once again a very interesting idea from Topalov! Aggression and bravery are his hallmarks!

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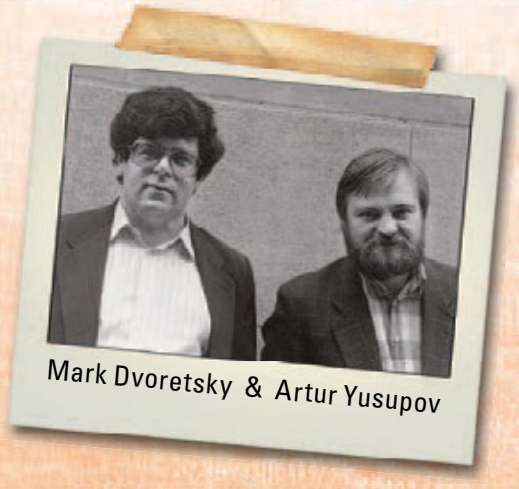
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978-3-283-00518-4

978-3-283-00519-1

each € 24.95

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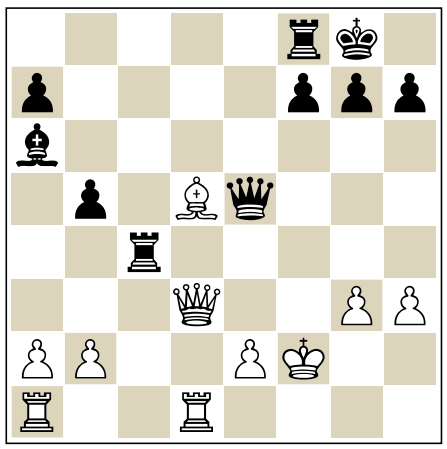
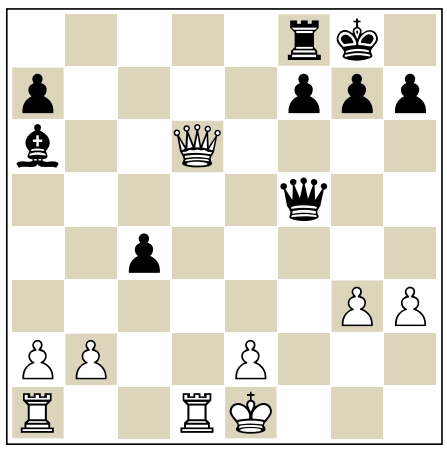
15.h3 ♘xf2! 16.♔xf2 ♗c5+
Black has sacrificed a piece, but White's king is not feeling very comfortable.
17.♗e3 The natural way to stop the check, 17.e3, runs into 17...g5.
17...♗xe3+ 18.♔xe3 b5
Creating multiple threats, most notably ...b4 and ...♕b6+.
19.♕d3 ♖c4 20.♘xd5 exd5 21.♗xd5 Anand was forced to give back the piece with his king still left in the centre. However, he is a pawn up, and by giving the piece back he has bought himself enough time to evacuate the king.
21...♕g5+ A variation such as 21...♕b6+ 22.♔f3 ♖c5 23.e4 ♕c7 24.♔g2 ♕xe5 25.♖d2 ♗c8 is fairly close to equal, but White holds a slight initiative. Topalov made a very bold choice, true to his style, and made yet another sacrifice!
22.♔f2 ♕xe5



Topalov has made many brilliant exchange sacrifices over the last 10 years, but this is not one of them!
23.♗xc4 bxc4 24.♕d6
One of the elements of making a sacrifice is playing on your opponent's fear. Vishy is not comfortable with the thought of his undefended king, so he tries to evacuate it by putting pressure on the a6 bishop.
However, he missed the game continuation. A better try for a win would have been 24.♕d4 ♕f5+ (or 24...♕e6 25.g4) 25.♔g2 ♗b7+ 26.♔h2 ♖e8 27.♖d2. In both variations White relies on his control of the dark squares to defend the king. And to me it seems like White is very close to winning. Topalov's sacrifice was surely entertaining, but also rash – Anand made the wrong choice under pressure (although it must be said that it's hard not to be nervous after getting struck by lightning – a.k.a. team Topalov – a couple of times earlier in the game!). Two consecutive wins against his former challenger would surely have been cause for celebration!
24...♕f5+ 25.♔e1



25...♕xh3! This is the key move! Black gives up his bishop, but gets perpetual check against White's adventurous king!
26.♕xa6 ♕xg3+ 27.♔d2 ♕f4+ 28.♔c2 ♕e4+ 29.♔c1 ♕e3+ 30.♔b1 ♕e4+ 31.♔c1 Draw.
A busy day at work for the white king! Who said draws are boring? In the end a draw was a very just result for these two contemporary giants.

Since Magnus had made a draw against Wang Yue in between his two fights against the Sofia-finalists, his second win against Topalov secured him tournament victory – in the penultimate round! This would usually be an extraordinary accomplishment, but truth be told: the kid did the same thing last year! We'll chalk this one down as 'to be expected'!

Magnus had nothing to fear going into the final round, which was played four hours earlier than the previous ones. This might affect a player's game – but I cannot say this for sure. What I *am* sure of is that I wasn't up at 4 a.m. in the morning to watch! As has become the custom for Magnus's games, there was no resting on his laurels. Gashimov was shown no mercy, even though the tournament had already been decided. But it must be said that the guys participating in Nanjing are no push-overs, not even for the Norwegian phenomenon, and in the end Magnus had to settle for a draw against the Azeri.

Striking back after a loss has been one of Magnus's strengths throughout his relatively short career. This time it was not a single loss, but a streak of poor games. However, in Nanjing he showed that when he has 'the flow', there's no one in the world who can stop him! His games with white against Topalov and Bacrot are so ridiculously good, and so incredibly simple. Centralizing the pieces, controlling the centre, and then – more quickly than you can flick your fingers – he gets some sort of decisive attack. Chess made easy! Now if it could just seem as simple when I play! One thing I know for sure: I'm counting the days to the London Chess Classic, hoping for an encore – along with all other fans of chess!

Nanjing 2010 — **cat. XXI**

				1	2	3	4	5	6		TPR
1	Magnus Carlsen	IGM	NOR	2826	* *	½ ½	1 ½	½ ½	1 1	1 ½	7	2903
2	Vishy Anand	IGM	IND	2800	½ ½	* *	0 1	½ ½	1 ½	½ 1	6	2831
3	Etienne Bacrot	IGM	FRA	2716	0 ½	1 0	* *	1 ½	½ 0	1 ½	5	2776
4	Vugar Gashimov	IGM	AZE	2719	½ ½	½ ½	0 ½	* *	½ ½	½ ½	4½	2739
5	Veselin Topalov	IGM	BUL	2803	0 0	0 ½	½ 1	½ ½	* *	½ 1	4½	2722
6	Wang Yue	IGM	CHN	2732	0 ½	½ 0	0 ½	½ ½	½ 0	* *	3	2623

ROWSON'S REVIEWS

Are you Dynamic?

Well, are you? The word 'dynamic', unsurprisingly, does not lend itself very well to a static definition. I suspect most people who use the word just use it to denote excitement and interest. Many publishers are complicit in this respect, because chess players want to be 'dynamic', and are more likely to buy books with this word in the title, if only to think of themselves as lively creatures.

Despite some mental scars incurred from studying analytical philosophy, I believe it is pseudo-intelligent to insist on defining terms like 'dynamic' before proceeding with a discussion. You rarely get very far by pinning down a word, if only because you need other words to do so, and they can fly away like balloons at any time. However, discovering a word's etymology can really help, because this gives you a word's story, and if you know where a word came from and how far it has travelled, you can play a part in shaping it for your own ends, and perhaps send it in new directions. In this sense, language is dynamic.

The Greek roots of 'dynamic' reveal that it is about potency or power, evolving into an emphasis on the power of activity and movement, and a scientific account of particular objects in motion as a result of some external force. The antonym is always 'static', which means lack of movement, often due to objects of the same weight balancing each other out.

What does this give us in a chess context? Most positions are not stable structures, and they are liable to change as a result of 'external forces' i.e. moves, at any time. The dynamic concerns power that lies in movement (the fact that the position will inevitably change) and imbalance (asymmetry of positional and material factors). The power in one's position, particularly the value of one's pieces, varies depending on the extent that different positional factors weigh against each other. If your structures are the same, your kings equally safe, and you have the same material, your scope for dynamic play will be limited. Sometimes it takes only minor asymmetries in a position for dynamic considerations to become dominant.

These kind of considerations are developed in theory and practice in an expanded and updated version of Mihai Suba's classic *Dynamic Chess Strategy*. Until recently, this book was one of the many orphans of the implosion of British chess publishing in the mid to late nineties. Published by Pergamon Press in 1991, and deserved winner then of the BCF Book of the Year Award, the print run was probably only two thousand or so, which explains why, until recently, you could only purchase second hand copies of the book online for three figure sums. I know this because at some point I lost my original copy, and missed it quite badly. I even had my debit card out ready to squander some of my son's inheritance, but managed to desist just in time, and consoled myself with the thought that somebody would publish it again soon. I am grateful to New In Chess for doing so, and glad that a real gem of chess literature is now back in circulation.

I remember that I found the book very difficult when it first came out. I was a teenager, and although I was desperate to be 'dynamic', I don't think I really understood what Suba was trying to say. The book is quite philosophical in places, and wonderfully so, but I needed some maturity to appreciate these aspects of the book. I came back to the book when writing books of my own, and they proved particularly helpful for making the case for Black's best tools for fighting against White's initiative.

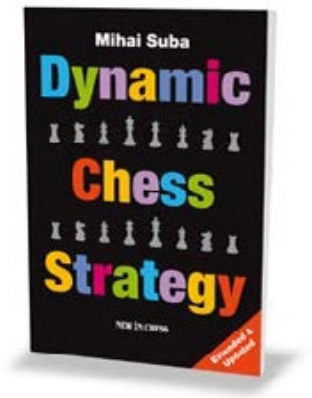
The more I read, the more I feel that all the best books, not just in chess, are those that could only have been written by one particular person, a person who struggled with something long enough that they have a unique perspective and a particular way of sharing it. Almost all chess books have variations, but few have authorial 'voices', and when a chess 'voice' comes along, the books tend to sell well, because chess players are relatively starved for personal views of the game they can relate to. It

has been said that as a result of the Internet everybody is 'drowning in information and screaming for knowledge', but in chess publishing I would say we are drowning in computer variations and screaming for human voices. It is not just text and verbs about positions that people seek. Good chess writing should be not merely informative, but also meaningful, and say something about the experience of being a chess player.

For instance 'I do not pretend to have prepared a great elixir that I can serve up to you like a pancake. I want you to learn by yourselves.' Or 'An honest theoretician's duty is to warn against refuted moves and other things which one should avoid. He may direct us to an attitudinal subset of all fairly good moves and playable moves. Unfortunately, many chess books still concentrate on abracadabra ways to fool the opponent.'

Dynamic Chess Strategy is a classic because it offered chess players a new perspective on an old game, but also because it did so in a distinctive style and manner. True originals are not those who don't copy others, but those who cannot be copied, and this applies to Suba's work. His polemical voice is slightly lofty at times, occasionally cryptic, and you sometimes wonder who exactly he thinks he is talking to. I forgive him all of that, because most of the time his voice is authoritative, playful and irreverent. He also writes like somebody who enjoys communicating, which is another trait that is relatively rare among chess authors, many of whom, as we know, write principally to pay the bills.

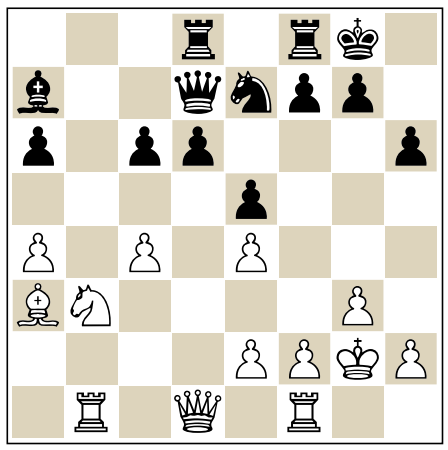
A further reason not to try too hard to define 'dynamic' is that Suba uses several auxiliary terms that also require definition, and need each other to make sense of themselves. In addition to dynamism, there is potential, information, initiative, plans and strategy – all of which he explains in detail. The heart of the book is a response to 'classical chess strategy' which Suba grasps firmly and views as something people need to assimilate, but which he views as incomplete because it tends to focus on static positions of the kind that only arise between players of different strengths, which features, as Suba puts it memorably: 'One doing, the other applauding'.



Mihai Suba
Dynamic Chess Strategy

Suba is keen for the kind of strategy that helps us to help ourselves form our own perspective on the game. 'Chess strategy must lose some of its grandness, some of its sentential character, must come back to earth and become practical, so that we can make it work for us move to move.' In Suba's case, he found this in a deep appreciation for hedgehog-like structures, many of which are examined in the book, but also a new perspective on chess as a whole.

The touchstone of chess strategy, for Suba, is what he calls 'dynamic potential' which he actually calls *the* most important factor of a position. Suba very carefully defines his terms, so I don't want to butcher them here, but dynamic potential concerns the harmony and flexibility of a position and its responsive capacity. These subtle factors are often hidden in a position, and a player's strength and style depend on their ability to discern these strategic features before they manifest in concrete tactics. The pattern recognition that defines chess strength involves the evaluation of what is latent in a position and not just the recognition of what is already present.



Mihai Marin – Jonathan Rowson
Porto Mannu 2008
position after 21.♔xg2

White has recently forced some exchanges to create what appears superficially to be a promising position. White has various ideas here, including ♘a5 and ♖b7, a timely c5 break, or possibly just playing ♕c2 and building pressure on the d-pawn. However, a closer look suggests White's position is actually very low on dynamic potential.

21...c5!

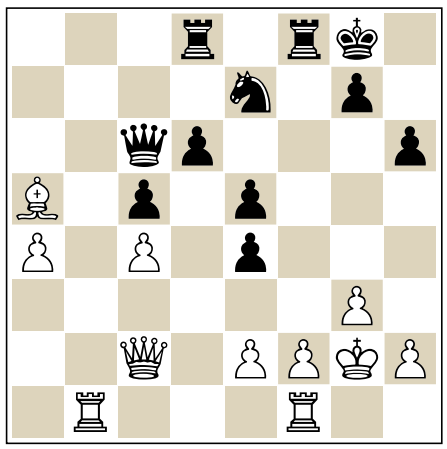
I quickly sensed that this move was correct, but found it hard to muster the confidence to play it immediately. The idea of losing the elasticity of my structure and blocking my bishop ran counter to almost all my 'classical' instincts, but I realised that after this move I actually increased my dynamic potential and had everything to look forward to, including re-routing my bishop and playing ...f5, while my opponent's position suddenly looked rather lifeless and pointless. A position that appeared slightly better for White before ...c5 suddenly looks better for Black. Suba's book explains all this: 'We are all geniuses when we find nice combinations. Of course we are, since we have had to make such efforts to break with

dogma in order to find them. The degree to which a move surprises a player corresponds, to a certain extent, with his chess culture, on how much dogma he has digested. In a given position, a quiet pawn move may look less obvious to a GM than putting the queen en prise.'

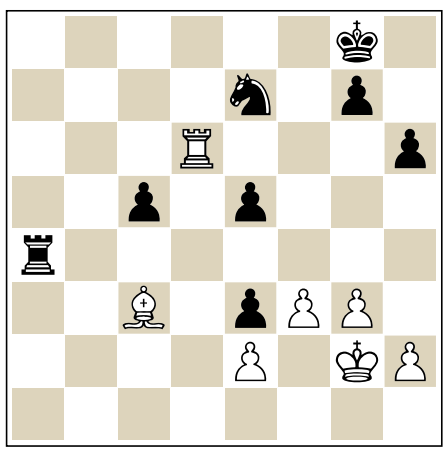
Suba also writes about how many classical precepts that apply to endgames are actually the opposite in the middlegame (e.g. drawing tendencies of opposite bishops, queenside majorities, outside passed pawns) and makes an amusing reference to the power of 'bad bishops protecting good pawns'. In this case, I suspect many players, including myself on another day, would barely *see* a move like 21...c5, which can be rejected at a purely unconscious level because of all the things that are superficially wrong with it.

'How then do surprise moves appear? Does it mean that they are not inferable from the position? On the contrary, it means that our rules for inference are either incomplete or wrong. Try to clothe the standard, classical approach with a new, dynamic strategy and you will be better equipped both to find brilliant combinations yourself and to thwart your opponent's in good time. The first thing to do is to regard the moves as a continuum: giving up something to get a superior something else in exchange. Fair trade is no robbery!'

22.♘c1 ♕c6?! 22...♖b8!? was more testing. **23.♕c2 ♗b6** 23...f5!?. **24.♘a2 ♗a5 25.♗b2 ♗b4** 25...f5!? 26.♗c3 ♗c7 27.♗a1 fxe4 28.♘c3 e3+ 29.f3 ♗a5. **26.♗c3 a5 27.♗a1 f5 28.♘c3 ♗xc3 29.♗xc3 fxe4 30.♗xa5**



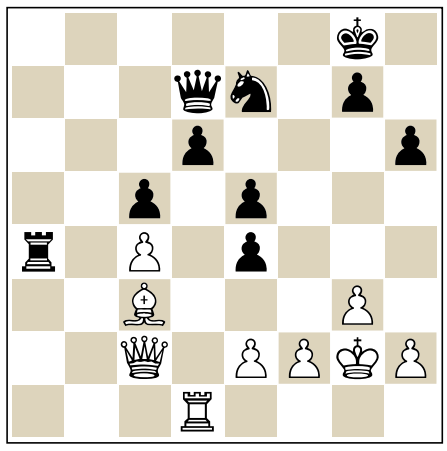
30...♖a8?! 30...e3+ 31.f3 ♖a8 32.♖b6 (32.♖b5 ♘f5) 32...♕c7 33.♖a6 ♕d7 34.♖xa8 ♖xa8 35.♗c3 ♖xa4 36.♖d1 ♖xc4 37.♕b3 ♕a4 38.♕xa4 ♖xa4 39.♖xd6



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

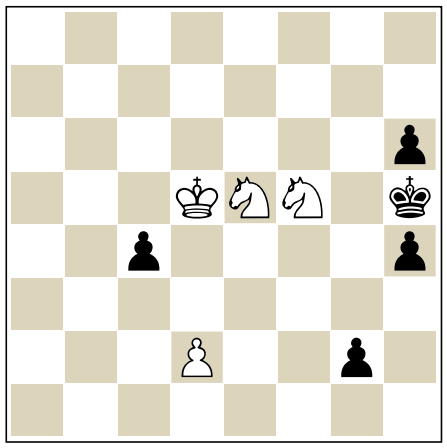
I saw this position and wasn't too excited about it, but perhaps it was the best option available: 39...♖a2 40.♔f1 ♖c2 41.♗xe5 ♖c1+ 42.♔g2 ♖e1 43.f4 ♖xe2+ 44.♔f3 ♖xh2 45.♖d8+ ♔f7 46.♔xe3, with good drawing chances.

31.♖b6! ♕c7 32.♖a6 ♕d7 33.♖xa8 ♖xa8 34.♗c3 ♖xa4 35.♖d1!



And White managed to hold the draw. **35...♖xc4 36.♕b3 ♕e6 37.♖xd6 ♕xd6 38.♕xc4+ ♕d5 39.♕xd5+ ♘xd5 40.♗xe5 c4 41.♔f1 g5!? 42.g4 e3 43.♔e1 c3 44.fxe3 c2 45.♔d2!** 45.♗b2 ♘f6! 46.♔d2 (46.h3 ♘e4! with domination) 46...♘xg4 47.♔xc2 ♘xh2 and I have some practical chances. **45...♘xe3 46.♔c1 ♘xg4 47.♗b8 ♔f7** Draw.

In addition to authorial voice, I like the fact that Suba has a strong feeling for chess aesthetics, for instance in the following study: 'The beauty of this study lies in having the first move produce the greatest possible degree of surprise and in the idea of surprise and in the idea of constructing a cage around Black's king. By all rules, the solution looks awkward, even ridiculous – the last move you would even think about. After you learn the solution, the idea is clear. White avoids intermediate checks and creates a zugzwang position!'

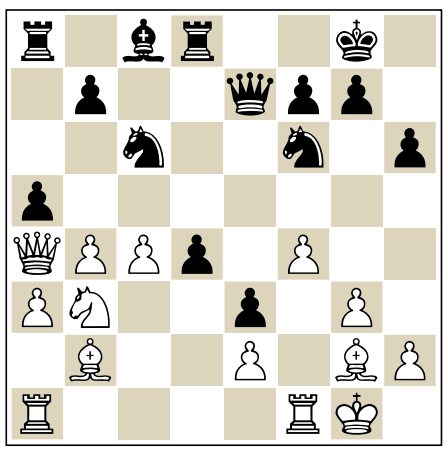


1.♔c6!! g1♕ 2.♘xh4! Hard to believe that Black is not winning, but after any sensible move, for instance **2...♕h1+ 3.♘hf3!** the black king is trapped.

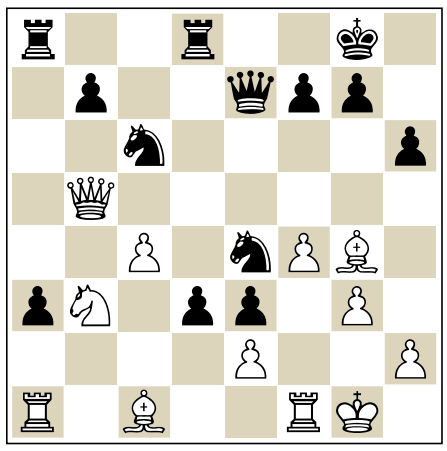
The following game, played just before the first edition was published, is one of the highlights of the book, given here with abbreviated notes.

EO 44.11 – A16
Christopher Ward
Mihai Suba
Eastbourne British Championship 1990

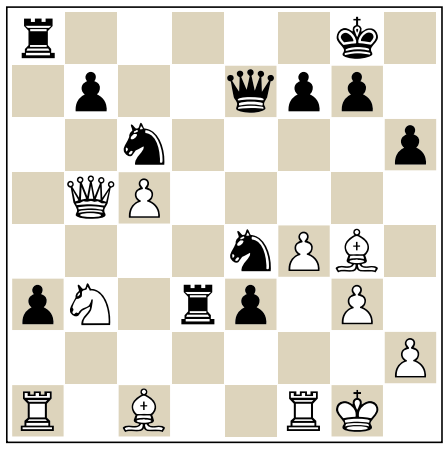
1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 c5 3.♘f3 e6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4 ♗b4 6.g3 0-0 7.♗g2 d5 8.♕b3 ♗xc3+ 9.♕xc3 e5 10. ♘b3 d4 11.♕a5 ♕e8 12.0-0 ♘c6 13.♕a4 h6 14.♘c5 a5 15.a3 e4 15...♘d7!?. **16.b4 ♕e7 17.♘b3 ♖d8 18.♗b2 e3 19.f4**



I remember watching a video reconstruction of this game. At this point, Suba wanted to uncover an attack on the white queen before White could play b5 and take on d4. I remember he expressed his thinking with the words: 'A tempo, a tempo, my kingdom for a tempo!' **19...♗h3!! 20.♗xh3** 20.b5 ♗xg2 21.♔xg2 ♕e4+ 22.♔g1 ♕c2 23. bxc6 ♕xe2. **20...axb4 21.♕b5 bxa3 22.♗c1 ♘e4 23.♗g4 d3**

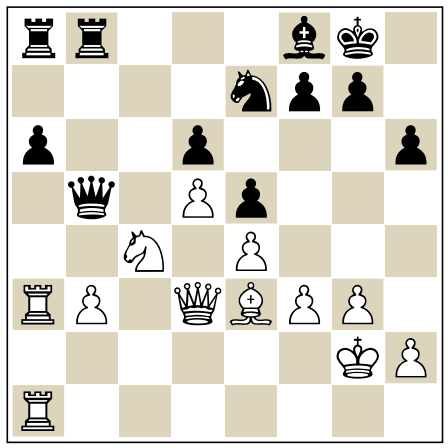


24.exd3 24.♗xe3 ♘xg3 25.♗c5 ♕h4. **24...♖xd3 25.c5** 25.♗xa3 ♖xa3 26.♖xa3 ♕xa3 27.♕xb7 ♖xb3 28.♕xc6 ♘d2 29.♕e8+ ♕f8 30.♕xf8+ ♔xf8 31.♖c1 f5 32.♗e2 with drawing chances.



25...♘f2! 26.♖xf2 26.♗f5 ♖ad8! 27.♖e1 ♖d1 28.♗xa3 ♖xa1 29. ♖xa1 ♕f6 30.♗c2 ♘d4 31.♘xd4 ♕xd4. **26...exf2+ 27.♔xf2 ♕e4! 28.♖a2 ♕d5! 29.♖d2 ♖xd2+ 30. ♗xd2 a2 31.♗f3** Black can win by taking any of the three minor pieces! **31...♕xf3+ 32.♔xf3 a1♕ 33.♕xb7 ♕h1+ 34.♔e3 ♖b8** White resigned.

In case all this talk of dynamism and wacky examples of seemingly anti-positional pawn moves and surprising piece sacrifices scare you, I can assure you that you are in safe hands with Suba, because he understands and enjoys aspects of classical strategy too. For instance, I liked the following example (White to play) which is a great example of a puzzle that is really easy, once you have seen the solution!



1.♕f1! Leaves White with a decisive positional advantage. The idea is simply ♘d2 and Black's position will collapse.

Finally, Suba clearly feels that dynamic chess strategy allows us to better express ourselves as chess players. For instance, he writes: 'Chess allows us to fully express our personalities' and 'The main goal of dynamic strategy is develop the personality of a player, to discover everyone's uniqueness and turn it to good account.'

These lines were some of the very few where I respectfully disagree with the author. In fact it is precisely because I think chess doesn't allow us to fully express our personalities that I am playing much less these days, and seeking new avenues of self-expression. Chess is beautiful, fascinating, absorbing and much else besides, but no matter how dynamically we think or play, there are important things in life, mostly discovered through attachments to other human beings, that the game can never give us. However, for those who live through chess, and rely on the game as your main form of self-expression, I should say that part of me envies you, and I warmly recommend the tools and ideas in this book to help you on your way.

Two white draws can't stop **Vachier-Lagrave**

He wouldn't have known he was invited if he hadn't checked his spambox. And he couldn't have played in Hoogeveen if the Univé tournament had not been moved by a day. But once these obstacles were overcome **Maxime Vachier-Lagrave** didn't look back and posted one of the best results in his young and flourishing career. And even agreed to report on his fine victory!

This is my first try as a reporter. Something that I wouldn't do usually, but you have the right to know the ugly truth: I was lured. And well, I thought I had deserved the right to write about my own tournament, as for once I had (almost) nothing to be ashamed of.

In fact, there might have not been any tournament at all for me. Five months earlier, when checking my mailbox, like I do maybe four times a day, I suddenly realized that there were more spams than usual. So I decided to go to the fishy spambox, and realized that three days earlier I had got a mail from Jeroen van den Berg about the Univé tournament in Hoogeveen. Ask gmail how on earth it went to that place ☺.

Not such a big deal, but from now on I check my spambox on a regular basis – just to avoid those three days becoming two weeks next time. Then another problem surfaced: the start of the tournament overlapped with the end of the European Club Cup in Plovdiv. As it happened, Alexey Shirov was also going there – as a member of the same team, in fact. So Jeroen, having consulted the organizing committee, decided to move the tournament by one day. Which meant that we would have no free day. And that Alexey and I would have to get from Plovdiv to Hoogeveen by the 7.30 morning plane from Sofia. But such is the life of a chess player, and anyway – as I naively thought – I would be able to prepare for the tournament properly, as I had to play all three opponents with both colours. The other two players were last year's winner Sergey Tiviakov and, younger than me, Dutch hope Anish Giri (I like being reminded that I am getting older with all these youngsters around).

So here I was, prepared and excited (probably because I'm still a bit young) to go on a 15-day chess trip. The fact that I recently stopped studying made the days at home feel a bit longer.

Once Maxime Vachier-Lagrave arrived in Hoogeveen, life was peaceful and easy. The tough part was finding the invitation to the Univé tournament in his spambox.

FRANS PEETERS

To summarize my state of mind in the plane from Sofia to Amsterdam: tired (we had to leave from the hotel at 4.30 a.m., which left me the choice between sleeping three hours and not to sleep at all. Carelessly enough, I had gone for the second option) and totally bored with my play, as my games in Plovdiv were a succession of 'might-have-beens'. Then the first very good sign arrived when we came to the hotel in Hoogeveen, a quiet and beautiful place in the middle of a big park. I could even view deer from my window. Exactly what I needed and definitely nicer than seeing a big building – or even a big casino (well, this is a matter of taste). I decided that it would be easy to be serious during the tournament, and not to sleep as late as I usually do! And even to have breakfast, not something a chess player is used to doing. So after a nice rest I went to the drawing of lots (which partly consisted of a cream whipping contest – easily won by the Dutch players, who may have trained for it ☺), where I got number 2.

It's usually number 1 that gives the privilege of double whites to begin with, but with four players and double rounds you reverse Rounds 2 and 3 to avoid someone getting three blacks in a row. And so in this format number 2 is two-whites-to-start. In fact, I don't like this privilege, because if you fail to win either of those two games, you're suddenly under pressure.

Sadly, my resolution to prepare properly before the tournament had somehow evaporated, and I had done only token work, my usual laziness taking over, I guess. The first round didn't turn out to be very exciting: Anish drew easily against Tiviakov thanks to a good novelty, an improvement on the Carlsen-Wang Yue game of three days before, and I personally hallucinated when trying to remember my preparation. After one careless move all chances of an opening advantage had vanished into thin air, but at least I was careful enough not to get worse and the game ended in a boring but quite well-played draw. The next day, I came to the board with different intentions – but so did Anish, who chose the ultra-sharp and trendy Anti-Moscow Variation. It was unexpected, but apparently I chose the right variation and got a good initiative. A bunch of mistakes from both sides later, and it finished into a well-fought draw. My fear had come true: two draws with white to start.

Alexey produced some attractive fireworks against Sergey's pet Scandinavian, with success. From the beginning of the fireworks, there was no chance to defend.

SD 8.11 – B01
Alexey Shirov
Sergey Tiviakov
Hoogeveen 2010 (2)

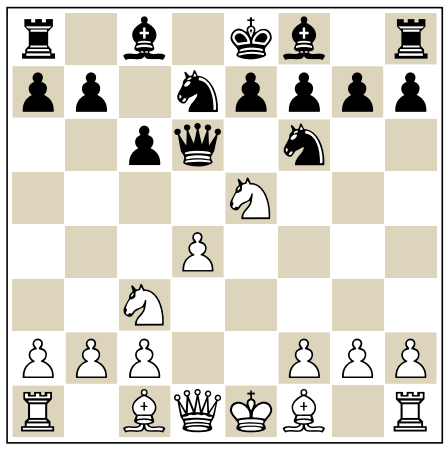
It's never easy to comment on a game you have not played yourself, if only because you didn't calculate an incredible number of lines and you didn't accurately evaluate the positions during the game. But in this case, even though I was quite busy with my own game – as any Anti-Moscow player should be – I also turned my head around quite a few times to check what on earth was going on in this game!

1.e4 d5

It's never so easo to beat Sergey in his pet Scandinavian. At least, some 'rather good' players haven't managed it...

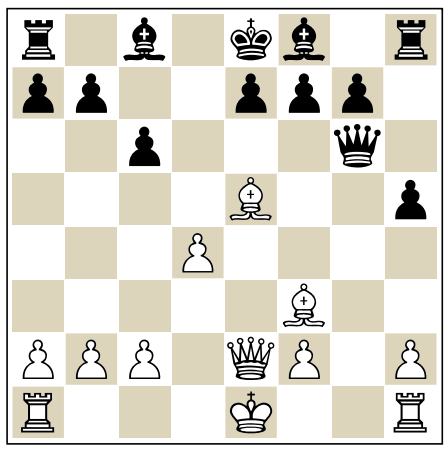
2.exd5 ♕xd5 3.♘c3 ♕d6 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6 6.♘e5 ♘bd7

This is the principled line, and here Alexey likes to go his own way.



7.f4!?

7.♗f4 ♘d5 8.♘xd5 ♕xd5 9.♗e2 (9.♘f3 ♘b6 10.♗e2 ♗f5 11.c3 ♕e4 12.♕d2 ♕c2 is close to equality, Ivanchuk-Tiviakov, Wijk aan Zee 2010) 9...♘xe5 10.♗xe5 ♕xg2 11.♗f3 ♕g6 12.♕e2 (12.d5? ♗g4! was Anand-Tiviakov, Wijk aan Zee 2006) 12...h5!?,



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and even though there have been some games with this line, it's not clear to me if White really has a strong attack. I remember having analysed this position a bit with Eric Prié, another big specialist of this line, during a tournament, but Black always had some resource, either by exchanging bishops, or just by normal development, always getting there just in time before White plays the breakthrough d5.

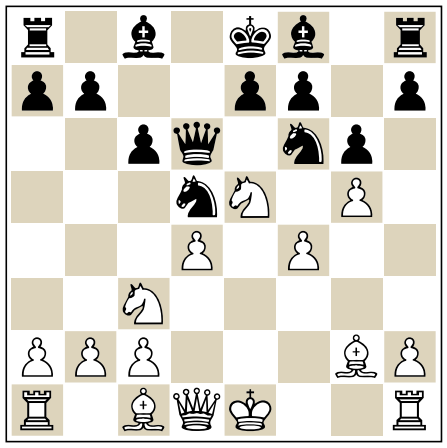
7.♘c4 ♕c7 8.♕f3 ♘b6 9.♗f4 is the new main line, but I'm never sure what is so good about White's position, because if Black manages to develop correctly, which happens quite often, I don't see how he will get into any trouble.

A sample line: 9...♕d7!? (9...♕d8 10.♗e5 ♗g4 11.♕g3 h5, as in Grischuk-Tiviakov, Sochi 2006, doesn't seem to be bad for Black either. But I like the idea of exchanging queens, which equalizes rather easily) 10.0-0-0 ♕g4 11.♕xg4 ♗xg4 12.f3 ♗e6 with equality.

7...♘b6 8.g4 ♘bd5!?

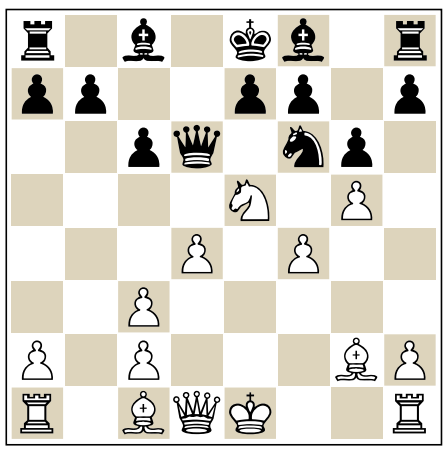
8...g6 9.g5 ♘fd5 10.♘e4 ♕d8 11.c4 ♘c7, with a complicated game.

9.♗g2 g6 10.g5



Well, this was probably the first time that I turned my head to see Alexey moving all his pawns forward, as usual. But the main thing is that he usually manages that part very well, although it is definitely not easy.

10...♘xc3 11.bxc3



11...♘d5?

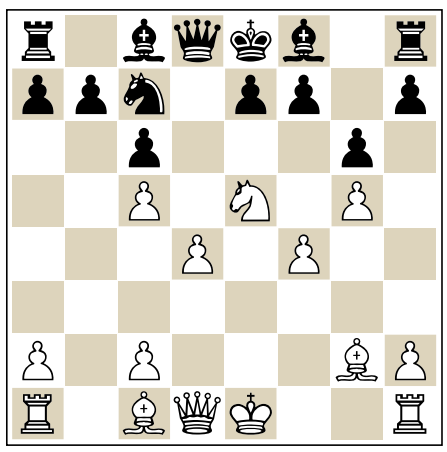
It's not easy to see, but after this move Black is in big trouble. He had to play 11...♘d7 12.♕e2 ♘xe5 13.fxe5 ♕c7 14.0-0 ♗f5, and I definitely don't think that White is better at all.

12.c4 ♘c7 13.c5 ♕d8

Up to this point, Sergey was still in his preparation, with 1:34 on his clock (yes, I remember that), while Alexey had already thought a bit and was now thinking longer and longer. I just had no idea what move he was thinking about.

NEW IN CHESS

Alexey Shirov deservedly won the best game prize for his demolition of Sergey Tiviakov's Scandinavian Defence.



14.d5!!

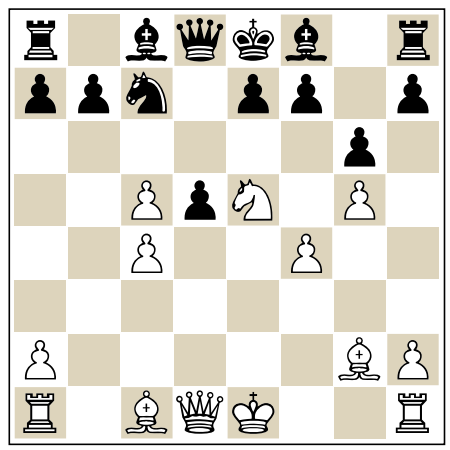
Actually, the computer understands quite quickly that this move is very strong. I wasn't that convinced at first, even though I was beginning to be really interested in what was happening there.

14...cxd5

Played after a whole hour of thinking. That gave me a clue about the real assessment of the position!

14...♘xd5 15.c4 ♘b4 16.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 17.♖b1! loses an exchange.

15.c4

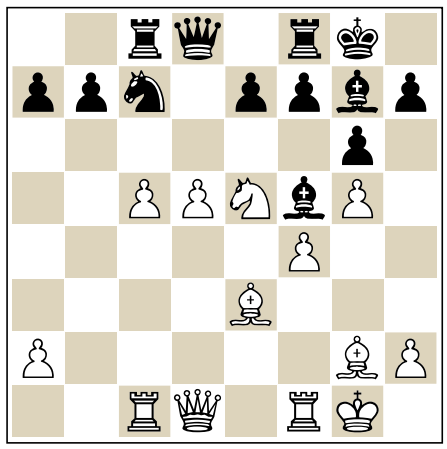


15...e6

This move will prove to be fatal on the dark squares. But what else is there to do?

15...d4? loses on the spot after 16.♕a4+ ♗d7 17.c6 bxc6 18.♗xc6.

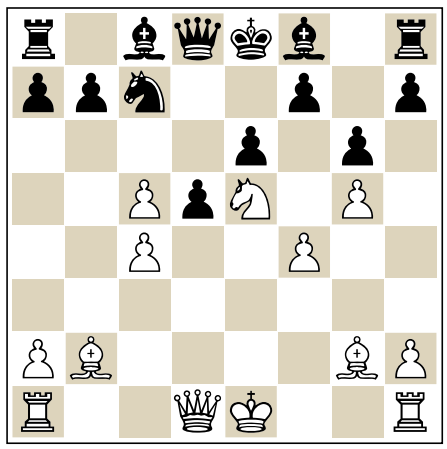
15...♗g7 16.cxd5 0-0 17.0-0 was the position I wasn't that sure of. But in fact White's pawns on c5 and d5 literally stifle Black's pieces. After, for instance, 17...♗f5 (17...f6 18.gxf6 exf6 19.♘c4 is the same story but then even worse) 18.♗e3 ♖c8 19.♖c1, remarkably it's totally impossible for Black to put pressure on the pawns.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

And as White has all the space, he can prepare a well-timed d6, after which his advantage will become crushing.

16.♗b2



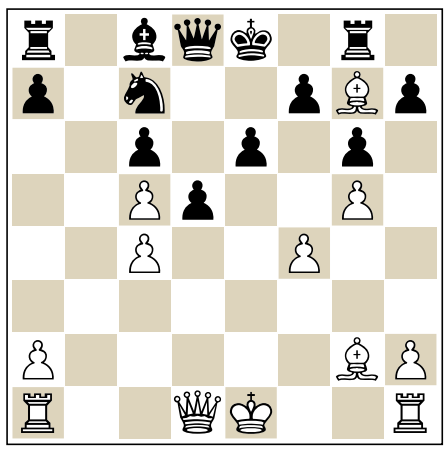
16...♗g7?!

After this, Black will just have no move at all.

Of course, 16...♗xc5? is a blunder because of 17.♘d3.

16...♗e7!? was the best chance, but not an obvious move at all to play: 17.♕a4+ ♔f8 18.c6! ♔g8 19.♘g4 h5 20.♘f6+ ♗xf6 21.♗xf6 ♕d6 22.♗e5 ♕c5 23.♖d1! doesn't look like fun either, but still leaves some hope to get play for only a bit of material.

17.♘c6! bxc6 18.♗xg7 ♖g8



19.♗e5!

An elegant way to prevent any piece from moving.

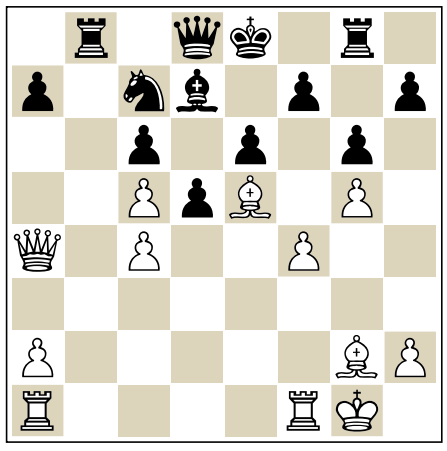
19.♗f6 ♕d7 20.♕a4 was just as strong in view of 20...♘a6 21.♖c1! ♘xc5 22.♕a3 ♘b7 23.cxd5 cxd5 24.♖c6!, and Black can't do anything either.

19...♗d7

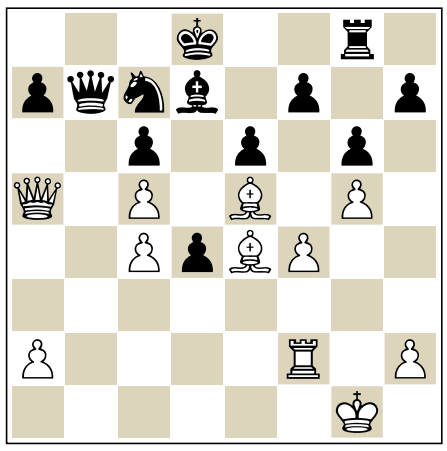
19...♗a6 20.♕a4! wins a piece. 19...♘a6 20.♕a4 ♕d7 21.♗d6.

20.0-0 ♖b8 21.♕a4

It's totally over. Black has just no move at all, and the ♗e5 is a total monster, which is worth all Black's pieces...



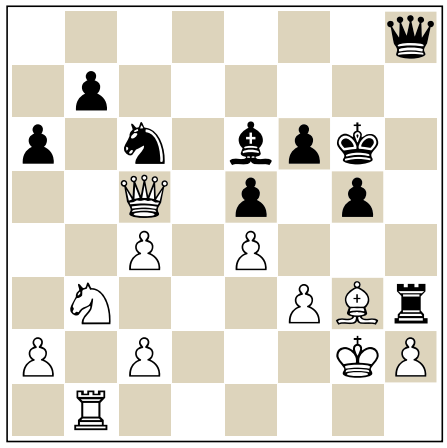
21...♖b7 22.♖ab1 ♕c8 23.♖xb7 ♕xb7 24.♖f2 d4 25.♕a5 ♔d8 26.♗e4



Black resigned.

This game deservedly won the special prize for the best game of the tournament.

In the next round I was Black against Tiviakov. Once again I got surprised by the opening choice, once again I chose the best answer from a practical point of view (clearly not from a theoretical one, that's for sure!), but this time I didn't miss my chance when it came. And what I was happy with was that I calculated both precisely and far ahead.



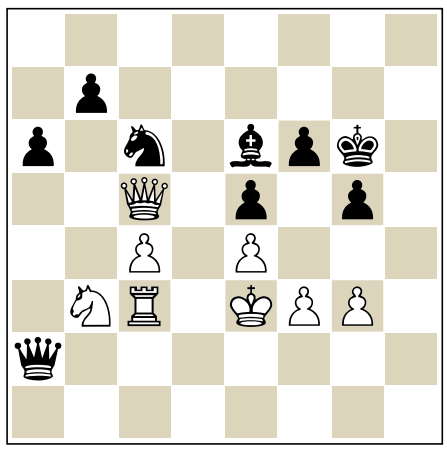
Tiviakov–Vachier-Lagrave
position after 26.♗g3

26...♖xg3+! 27.hxg3 ♕h3+ 28.♔f2 ♕h2+ 29.♔e3 ♕xc2 30.♖c1

30.♖e1 ♗xc4 31.♕d6 (31.♕b6 ♕c3+! 32.♔f2 ♕b2+ 33.♔g1 ♘d4!) 31...♘d4! 32.♘xd4 ♕d3+ 33.♔f2 ♕d2+ is curtains.

30...♕xa2 31.♖c3

Maybe the defensive shot Sergey was still counting on, but I had seen the killer reply far in advance. 31.♘d2 is met by 31...♕b2! 32.♖d1 ♕c2! and 31.♕b6 by 31...♕b2!.



31...♕b1!

Now it's over. I find it amusing, because this move just seems to let White's king breathe a bit more (freeing all second-rank squares) – which may be why it's not such an easy move to find!

31...♕b2?! 32.♖d3, and White is

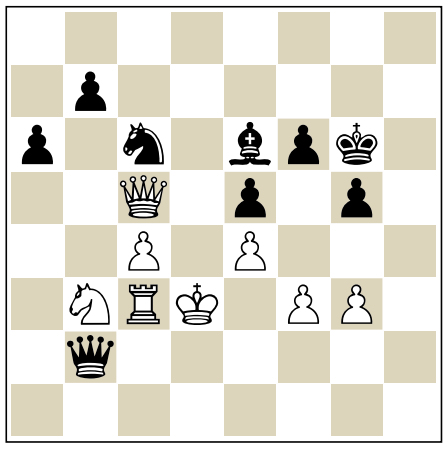
NEW IN CHESS

And what do you do when the tournament is over? Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Anish Giri happily resumed their never-ending blitz battle.

still fighting – well, at least not losing immediately.

32.♘c1

After 32.♔d2 ♕b2+! 33.♔d3



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

33...a5! is the VIP (very important point) of 31...♕b1!.

32.f4 is answered by 32...♗g4!. Also bad is 32.♕a3 ♕e1+ 33.♔d3 ♘d4!.

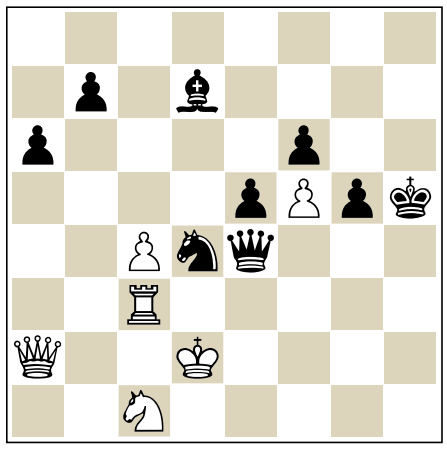
32...♘d4 33.f4 ♕b2 34.f5+ ♔h5 35.♔d3 If 35.fxe6 ♕xc3+ 36.♘d3 ♕c2!.

35...♗d7 35...b6! was more precise – after 36.♕f8 (36.♕a3 ♗xc4+ 37.♔xc4 ♕b5 mate) 36...♘f3! it could all have been over.

36.♕a5 Or 36.♕a3 ♕b1+ 37.♔d2 ♕xe4 38.g4+ ♔xg4 39.♖g3+ ♔xf5 and wins.

36...♕f2 36...♘c6! was curtains again: 37.♕a3 ♘b4+ 38.♔e3 ♘c2+.

37.♕a2 ♕xg3+ 38.♔d2 ♕g2+ 39.♔d1 ♕h1+ 40.♔d2 ♕xe4



Still, four pawns and an attack for an exchange is enough, also according to the computer, who is giving the position no less than –6...

White resigned.

In that same round Anish missed a big, and I mean BIG, chance against Alexey, and then somehow found himself from a risk-free, pawn-up endgame in a dangerous pawn-down one. The haemorrhaging stopped there, and he got the desired draw – after having defended the quite easy ♖ vs. ♖+♘ endgame.

So the crucial game was in Round 4, with Alexey and me fighting to get clear first place. It was a weird game, with many inaccuracies on both sides. But with such a complicated position, what can you expect? I'm actually happy with the way I handled the complications, probably also because I ended up winning, but it could easily have turned out the other way.

GI 5.8 – D86
Alexey Shirov
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Hoogeveen 2010 (4)

1.d4

I had been expecting 1.e4 and a passionate debate on the trendy ♗g5 Najdorf!

1...♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.

NEW!

Jan Gustafsson: A repertoire for black against 1.e4, Vol. 1 - The Marshall attack

Top German player Jan Gustafsson presents you with a complete repertoire for black against 1.e4 across two DVDs. Not just any old systems either; he presents what he himself plays against 1.e4. The topic of the first DVD is the Marshall attack, which is one of the most dynamic systems there is against the king's pawn – giving a pawn, black takes over the initiative and speeds to attack the white king. Gustafsson brings some new ideas to the fore and shows that black can nearly always keep the queens on and play for a win. That said, white isn't forced into allowing the Marshall, and with anti-Marshall systems being very popular, especially at GM level at the moment; he gives suggestions on how to play for all variations after 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0. Running time: 3hrs. 30 mins.

32,90 €

Jan Gustafsson: A repertoire for black against 1.e4, Vol. 2 - everything but the Spanish!

Anyone who plays …e5 against 1.e4 needs to be armed against more than just the Spanish, and on his second DVD Jan Gustafsson shows what he's got up his sleeve against all the other openings (against the Guioco Piano, King's Gambit, Vienna game, Bishop's game etc.). With his DVDs the grandmaster from Hamburg reaches out to everyone wanting to improve their chess, with hobby players, club players and even to top GMs sure to find new ideas here.

32,90 €

Our special bundle offer:
Buy Gustafsson Vol. 1+2
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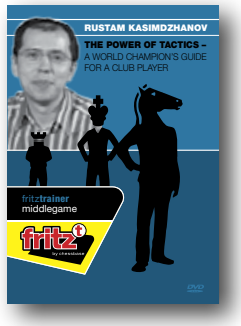
Rustam Kasimdzhanov: The Power of Tactics - A World Champion's Guide for a club player



Rustam Kasimdzhanov explains tactics astonishingly simply – he says that pins, double attacks and back rank weaknesses are the only three elements that are really important and the things that decide most games. The 2004 FIDE World Champion introduces these ideas with simple positions, gradually introducing and analysing more complex examples. Great stead is put upon the actual recognition of tactical patterns in a real game and the method of carrying them out. After all, it's very rare that you get to execute a tactical shot directly; it's more about finding the right preparatory moves at the board. The importance of the themes dealt with on the DVD is underlined by the accompanying and very up to date example games that Kasimdzhanov uses.

32,90 €

Nigel Davies: Tricks & Traps vol. 2

Tricks and traps are a large part of chess, especially in the opening. All kinds of surprises are lurking in store for unwitting players, from devastating sacrifices to move order tricks. If you prefer to be the hunter rather than the hunted, then you should have good knowledge of all the tricks hidden in your repertoire. On both of his new DVDs, Nigel Davies presents large numbers of tricks and traps arising from 1.e4 (Vol. 1) and 1.d4 (Vol. 2)

Tricks & Traps Vol. 1 - 1.e4 Openings
29,90 €

Tricks & Traps Vol. 2 - 1.d4 Openings.
29,90 €

Karsten Müller: Endgames 7 - The principles of weakness and fortresses

The seventh volume covers a broad spectrum of topics, including the art of pawn play, weaknesses, converting advantages, stalemate, fortresses and the art of defence right through to typical mistakes. A lot of elements, but ones that tie in with each other – pawn play is critical; the incorrect handling of pawns leads to inevitable positional weakness and of course, converting advantages isn't solely relevant to endgames! Learn how to grind out a technical win with an extra piece or exchange, or see how to use space advantages and better piece mobility. The art of defence, along with fortresses and stalemate, make up another group of common themes – never resign too early! If you are well versed in the art of the fortress, sometimes a way to draw can unexpectedly present itself. Mistakes are what give chess between humans that bit of zest. Familiarise yourself with the common sources of error, so that it will be you making the last error… but one!.

29,99 €

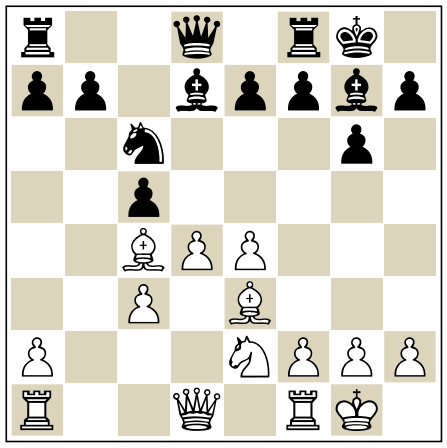
Viktor Bologan: Fit for the French - My White Repertoire

On this DVD, Viktor Bologan presents his repertoire against the French defence. The only way to seriously fight against the French is to play aggressively, and this is done best by playing 3.Nc3. The Moldovan grandmaster has been playing this way for over 20 years, after top trainer Zigurds Lanka imparted him with the secrets of the move. On the DVD, he recommends only main lines and the sharpest ones at that, e.g. Qg4 against the Winawer. The total running time for the DVD is over 5 hours.

29,90 €

♗c4 c5 8.♘e2 ♘c6 9.♗e3 0-0 10.0-0 ♗d7

My pet variation. But the truth is that I had stopped playing it after my painful loss against Ponomariov last year.



11.h4!?

A surprise, even coming from Alexey! Seeing this move, my first reaction was: 'How can I refute this child's move?' Then, after some useful thought, I realized that this move was not only not complete rubbish, but that it contained some venom, and I was unable to find a good way to prevent White from realizing his basic h5 plan!

11...♘a5

Let's look at the alternatives :

– 11...♗g4?! 12.f3 ♘a5 13.♗d3 cxd4 14.cxd4 ♗e6 15.d5! ♗xa1 16.♕xa1 f6 and here comes 17.h5.

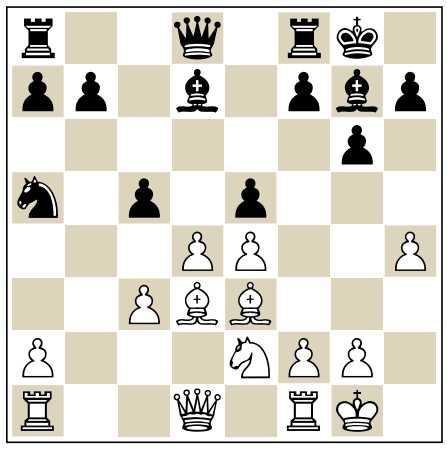
– 11...e5? is met by 12.dxc5! ♘a5 13.♗d5 – the difference with the game: the bishop can come to d5!.

– 11...e6 12.♗g5 ♕c7 (12...♕a5 13.♖b1!) 13.♖c1, and here h4-h5 is definitely on the cards, and White's attack can develop pretty smoothly.

– 11...cxd4 12.cxd4 e5 13.h5 exd4 14.♘xd4 ♘xd4 15.♗xd4 ♗c6 16.♗d5! ♗xd5 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.♕d4+ f6 19.exd5 was not at all to my taste. These positions, with a very strong passed pawn for White and a weak seventh rank, are always very tricky.

– Best was 11...♖c8! 12.♖c1 e6 13.h5 (13.♗g5 ♕a5!) 13...♕h4 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.f3 ♗h6! 16.f4, and the position is quite unclear. But I find it hard to believe that White's attack can be *that* dangerous. Obviously, during the game, I probably assessed this position less optimistically, partly because I knew that Alexey wouldn't care about anything and throw all his pawns at my beloved king, causing unnecessary worries ☺.

12.♗d3 e5

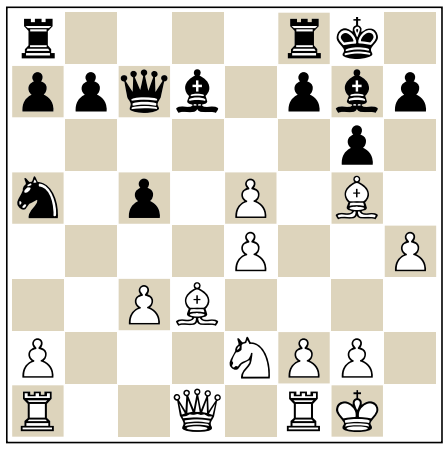


13.♗g5!

After 13.dxe5 ♕xh4! 14.♗xc5 ♗xe5! 15.f4 ♗c7 16.♗xf8 ♖xf8, I have excellent counterchances thanks to White's exposed king, which will get hit by my strong dark-squared bishop!

13...♕c7 14.dxe5!

This move had escaped my attention. The problem is that it is very strong, with the basic idea of attacking on the kingside. Of course, the genius computer doesn't agree with me, but I'm afraid I don't have its nerves of steel!

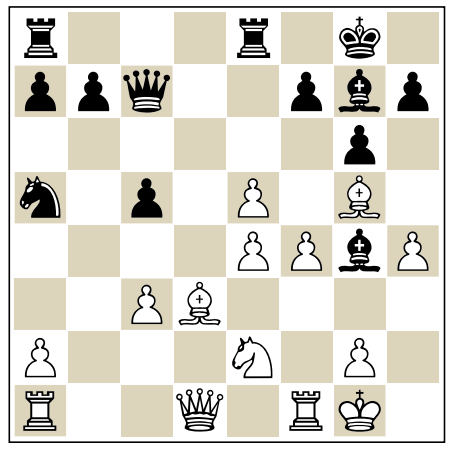


14...♖fe8!?

A default choice, after a 30-minute think. But my plan will work perfectly!

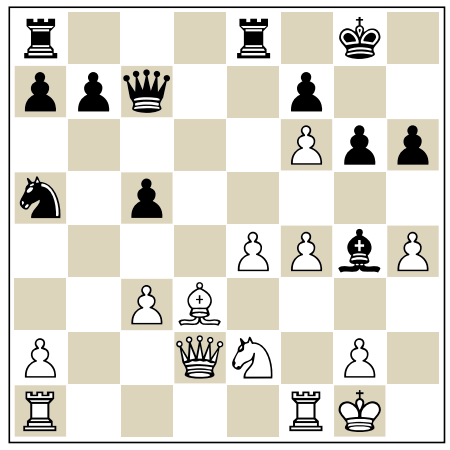
In case of 14...♗xe5 15.f4 ♗g7 16.f5, my position becomes uncomfortable after h5 and ♘f4-d5.

15.f4 ♗g4



16.♕e1!

At this moment of the game, I went through all kinds of emotional states because of several omissions. Let's look at my line of thought by re-entering my brain at this moment ☺: 16.♕d2 h6 17.♗f6 ♗xf6 18.exf6 first looked innocuous to me.



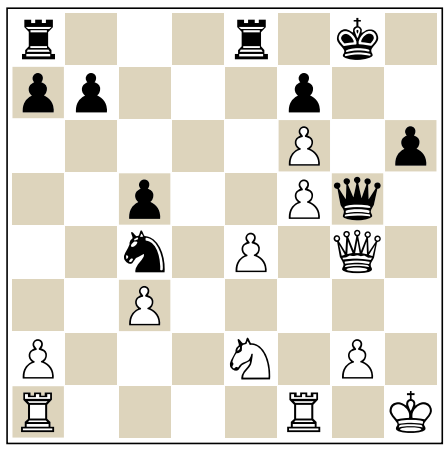
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Until after 18...♖ad8?! I saw the terribly strong 19.f5! g5 20.hxg5 ♘c4 (20...c4? 21.♘d4 cxd3 22.g6! and wins) 21.♕f4 ♕xf4 22.♘xf4 ♘e3 23.♖fe1 hxg5 24.♘d5 ♘xd5 25.exd5 ♖xe1+ 26.♖xe1 ♖xd5 27.♖e8+ ♔h7 28.♗c4! and White is clearly better.

18...♕b6?! (instead of 18...♖ad8?!) also looked good at first sight, but White proceeds in the same way and wins after 19.f5! g5 20.hxg5! c4+ 21.♘d4 cxd3 22.♖ab1 ♕d6 23.g6 ♕xf6 24.♕xh6 ♕g7 25.gxf7+ ♕xf7 (25...♔xf7 26.♕d6!) 26.f6!.

Hoogeveen 2010							cat. XVIII
			1	2	3	4		TPR
1	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	IGM FRA 2721	* *	½ 1	½ ½	1 1	4½	2880
2	Alexey Shirov	IGM ESP 2749	½ 0	* *	½ 1	1 ½	3½	2735
3	Anish Giri	IGM NED 2677	½ ½	½ 0	* *	½ 1	3	2702
4	Sergey Tiviakov	IGM NED 2637	0 0	0 ½	½ 0	* *	1	2442

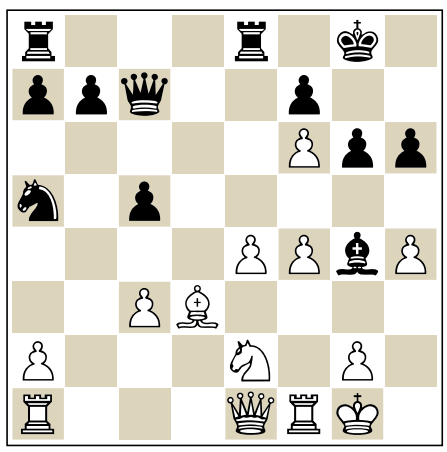
18...♕d8! was my next choice! And it would seem that after 19.f5 g5 20.hxg5 ♘c4! 21.♕f4?! ♕xd3 22.♕xg4 ♕e3+ 23.♔h1 ♕xg5.



ANALYSIS DIGRAM

I would even get the upper hand! Indeed, I will control the important e5-square, as well as the d-file, after 24.♖f4 ♘e5 25.♕h3 ♖ad8.

16...h6 17.♗f6 ♗xf6 18.exf6

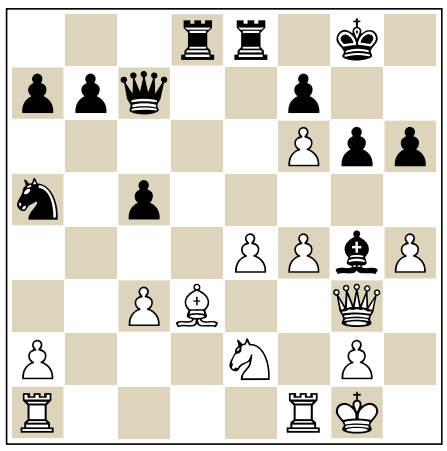


18...♖ad8?!

Here is the second part of the brainstorm. I should have played 18...♕d6 19.♗c2 ♕xf6 20.e5 ♕e7 21.♘g3!, but I would still have had problems on the kingside.

19.♕g3?

I thought I wouldn't have problems after 19.♗c2 ♕d6, as after 20.e5? ♕d2 I just win material. But there is the hidden resource 20.♘g3! ♕xf6 21.e5! ♕xh4 22.♘e4 ♕xe1 23.♘f6+, winning an exchange, with good practical winning chances. Exactly when I saw this 'flaw in my plan', Alexey played 19.♕g3, sparing me some headaches...



19...c4! Played at once, because I really liked the move. I guess Alexey had only thought of 19...♗xe2 20.♗xe2 ♖xe4 21.♗d3 ♖e6 22.♗xg6! with a white edge.

20.♕xg4

Black is better after 20.♗xc4 ♘xc4 21.♕xg4 ♖xe4! 22.♘g3 ♖ee8 23.f5 ♕b6+ 24.♔h1 ♘e3 25.♕f4 ♘xf1 26.♖xf1 ♕e3 27.fxg6 ♕xf4 28.♖xf4 ♖e1+ 29.♔h2 fxg6.

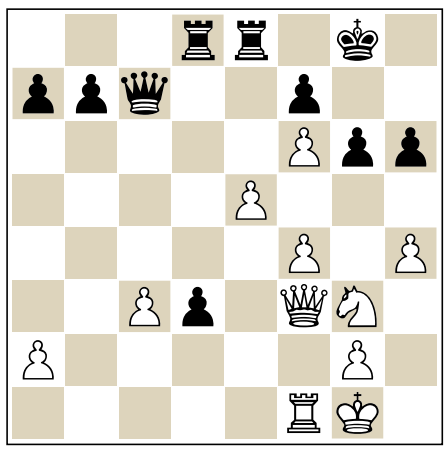
20...cxd3 21.♘g3 ♘c4!

The logical follow-up, which is very strong. I'm already close to winning thanks to the d-pawn. But there remains some hope for White because of the kingside attack – which, as we will see, I could have handled better!

22.e5!

Black wins after 22.h5?! ♘e3 23.♕f3 ♘xf1 24.♖xf1 ♕b6+.

22...♘e3 23.♕f3 ♘xf1 24.♖xf1



24...d2?

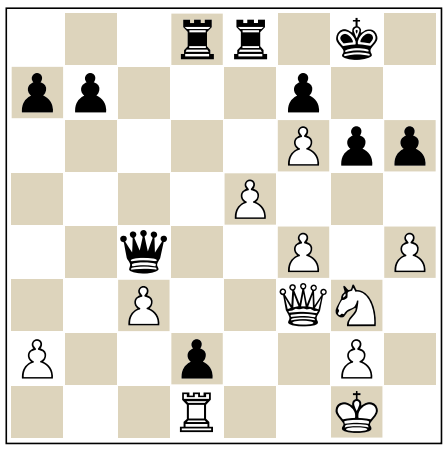
This move is based on two more calculation mistakes. As I told the

FRANS PEETERS

'For my win I was awarded the traditional glass chess set.'

audience when I explained my game afterwards, it might have looked totally smooth at first sight, but my brain still remembered the pitfalls and mistakes I had made.
Winning was 24...♕xc3 25.h5 ♕d4+ 26.♔h2 g5! 27.♕g4 ♖xe5. I hadn't noticed this simple move... until I had played 24...d2 and pressed the clock. (It *always* works like that.)

25.♖d1 ♕c4



26.♘f5?

And when there was still some hope of survival, Alexey made his final mistake.
Here 26.♘e4 ♖d3 (26...h5!? is a 'homemade' suggestion to prevent expansion on the kingside, especially in endgames. But I have no idea who is better here, at least before pushing Alt+F2. But White is getting good counterchances with the g5-square for the knight, supporting a well-timed e6!) 27.♕e2! was much better than I had thought at first glance. I had forgotten that after 27...♕a4?? 28.♘c5 ♖e3 29.♕xd2 ♕xf4 30.e6! wins immediately! My lack of coordination proves fatal, as I can't defend against the seemingly innocuous threats on my king.
After 27...b5!? (instead of 27...♕a4) 28.♖xd2 ♖xd2 29.♕xc4 ♖xg2+ 30.♔xg2 bxc4 31.h5 gxh5 White has 32.♔f3!, according to the genius, White has enough play for a draw, with his e- and f-pawns supported by the knight. And who am I to contradict a genius?

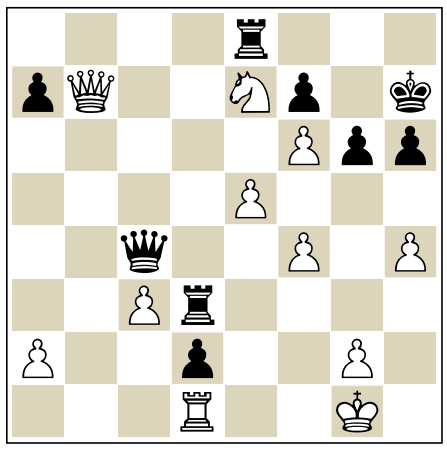
26...♖d3!

From now on, I managed to avoid stupid calculation mistakes. At last!

27.♘e7+ Or 27.♕g4 ♔h7 28.h5 ♖xe5! and wins.

27...♔h7 28.♕xb7

Or 28.♕g4 h5 29.♕g5 ♕a4! 30.♖xd2 ♖xd2 31.♘f5 ♖xg2+! 32.♕xg2 ♕xf4 and wins.



28...♖ed8!

I was looking for a move that would not leave any hope for White. After having gone down all kinds of wrong tracks, I finally came up with this strong – and very logical – move.
Other moves were less palatable:
28...♕xf4?? 29.♘d5 – no comment needed.
28...♕xc3?! 29.h5 ♕d4+ 30.♔h1 gxh5 31.♘f5, and life goes on. Maybe not for long, but I was looking for the killer shot!
28...♖e3? 29.♘d5! again 29...♖e1+ 30.♔h2 and Black is lost.

29.♕xa7

Black also wins after 29.h5 gxh5 30.♘f5 ♖xc3 31.♘d6 ♖xd6 32.exd6 ♖c1.

29...♖xc3!

White resigned.
If 30.♘d5!? (the last try) 30...♕xd5 31.♖xd2 ♖c1+ 32.♔h2 ♕c4! 33.♖xd8 ♕xf4+ 34.g3 ♖c2+, and mate follows.

Round 5 saw Shirov getting his revenge over the youth, in his pet style. In fact, Anish probably had no problems at all when Alexey opened hostilities with 16.d5. Then Anish saw the right defensive idea, but decided against it, to his deepest regret, as he said after the game.

My own game against Tiviakov was weird. I had planned to make him play, as he had lost three games in a row, so I decided against the critical variations of the Scandinavian. The problem is that I made a bad fingerfehler and didn't enter the intended and quite poisonous variation I had in mind, but went straight into a drawish position. Next I went for any slight chance I got, and most importantly, did so quite quickly. After one slip his position was already quite difficult, and when it was time to equalize with a cheap tactical trick, Sergey didn't see it. Then it was over, even though it took around 45 moves to convert it to the full point.

Going into the last round with a full-point lead, I decided to play it safe and go for a draw. And again it was the same story: I had not expected Anish's choice, and I answered with the right idea and held the draw without big problems – in fact I missed a couple of ideas to take over, probably partly because my mind was in a drawing mode.

I concluded the tournament with 4½ points out of 6, a one-point lead over Alexey, and a 2880 TPR, clearly the best I have ever had. For my win I was awarded the traditional glass chess set. Now the only question is where to put it in my home, a question that I will have time to figure out but that I haven't answered yet!

Let me conclude by mentioning what I think was Anish's best achievement in the tournament: to crush me at table-soccer on the first day! And well, he will get angry if I forget to mention that in one of our blitz battles (2 minutes each) he managed to crush me in seven games in a row.

Supported by a loud partisan crowd Vasily Ivanchuk had his revenge for the lost final in 2008.

EUROPE ECHECS

Revenge on the Cap

A tale of two King's Gambits!?

The place was the same, the date was the same (well almost) and the finalists were the same, but this time the outcome was different from the 2008 version of the Trophée CCAS in Cap d'Agde. In his account from back then (2008/8), **Glenn Flear** related how Ivanchuk and Nakamura battled it out in the final, with Nakamura winning after Ivanchuk mishandled a technical position. In 2010 it was Nakamura who was outplayed in an endgame, and so it proved to be the Ukrainian who ruled the day.

Vasily Ivanchuk is perhaps the most popular participant in Cap d'Agde as he always gives his utmost, both at the board and off it. An example being his willingness to analyse with all and sundry in the hotel reception an hour or so after he had won the competition. His motivation to even get to Cap d'Agde could not be doubted, as he travelled early in the morning from Plovdiv in order to turn up just before his first game. Indeed, fearing that the top seed could be delayed, the organizers had delayed the start of hostilities one hour whilst crossing their fingers!

Apart from a complicated journey, French industrial action was another threat, but Ivanchuk avoided all banana-skins, both on the journey and during the tournament. Indeed, he finished the event unbeaten (+9 =4 –0) and never even looked to have a disadvantage. In the Quarters, against Judit Polgar, and Semis, versus Bu Xiangzhi, he was dominant.

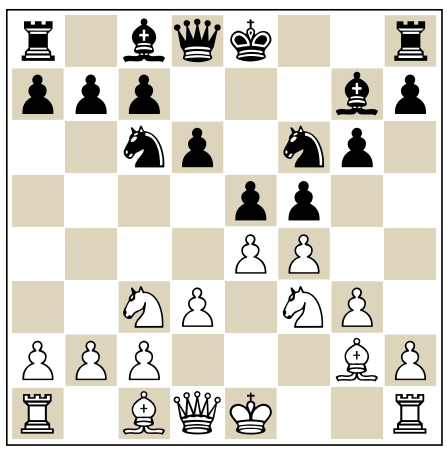
The defending champion Hikaru Nakamura won his pool with ease, as he did against Hammer in the Quarter-Finals, but lost his *sang-froid* and only won through by a miracle against Le Quang Liem in the Semi-Finals. In their first game Nakamura was always better as Black, but became frustrated and took too many risks with time getting short. He then had to win with white, which seemed unlikely as the Vietnamese player looked in control until near the end when he in turn let things slip. Le Quang Liem played very well throughout the event except when short of time when he had a tendency to blunder, as was the case here. Nakamura then showed who is the Blitz king in the play-off (3 minutes plus 2 second-increment). Is there anyone in the world who can match the American in Blitz? (Obviously, these lines were written before the World Blitz in Moscow – ed.)

So on a pleasant autumn evening in the south of France, with the theatre packed, commentary available in English and French and the electric atmosphere building nicely, the two gladiators, Ivanchuk and Nakamura, entered centre-stage. At that point no one would have been able to predict the openings that were about to occur.

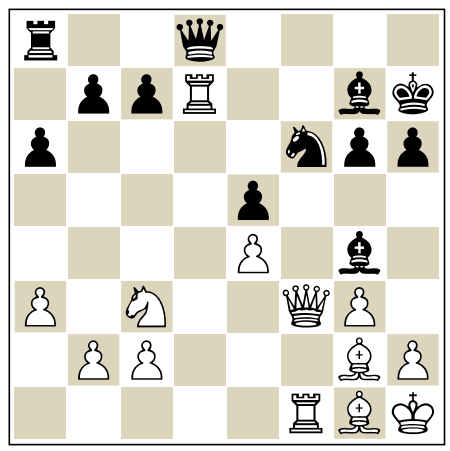
Ivanchuk is renowned for varying his opening choices and often being one step ahead of his opponents in the preparation stakes, but opting for the King's Gambit against Nakamura, in their first game, certainly raised a few eyebrows. The pawn was declined, and the game turned out to be a smooth win by Ivanchuk, helped by some anti-positional choices from Nakamura.

KG 5.1 – C30
Vasily Ivanchuk
Hikaru Nakamura
Cap d'Agde 2010 (Final-1)

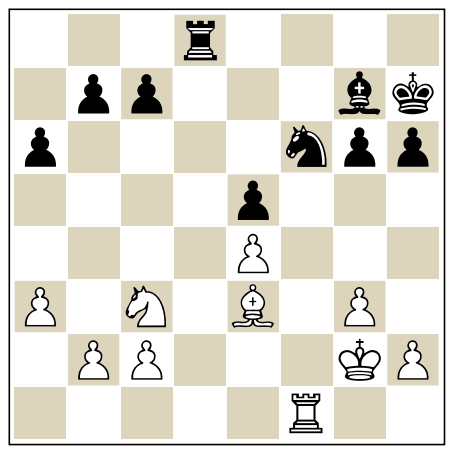
1.e4 e5 2.f4!?
A surprise for everyone, but I wonder what Nakamura thought of it?
2...♘c6 3.♘f3 f5!
Black has a good score with this anti-King's Gambit system, so perhaps Nakamura wasn't shaken by Ivanchuk's second move after all.
4.d3 d6 5.♘c3 ♘f6 6.g3 g6 7.♗g2 ♗g7
Black is well on the way to equality, so Ivanchuk decides that it is time to break the symmetry.



8.fxe5 dxe5 9.♗g5 h6 10.♗e3!?
Nor does White have anything after 10.♗xf6 ♗xf6 11.♘d5 ♗e6 (11...♗g7 12.♘h4!) 12.c4 0-0.
10...0-0 11.0-0 fxe4 12.dxe4 ♗e6 13.a3 ♔h7 14.♔h1 a6
Black clearly has comfortable equality. We could also note in passing that provoking ...h6 has simply enabled Black to cover the g5-square rather than created any weaknesses.
15.♗g1 ♖f7 16.♕e2 ♘d4 17.♕d3 ♘xf3 18.♕xf3 ♖d7 19.♖ad1 ♗g4 20.♖xd7



20...♗xf3?!
This is where the momentum starts to swing in Ivanchuk's favour. This imprecise move exchanges light-squared bishops, which suits White.
There was instead nothing wrong with recapturing on d7: 20...♕xd7 21.♕e3 and now there are many moves such as 21...♖f8 which maintain equality.
21.♖xd8 ♗xg2+ 22.♔xg2 ♖xd8 23.♗e3



A symmetrical and simplified position which plays slightly easier for White: Black's bishop is restricted by the e5 pawn and his kingside

pieces are a little tied down. Nakamura decides to play 'actively' but this ultimately rebounds on him.

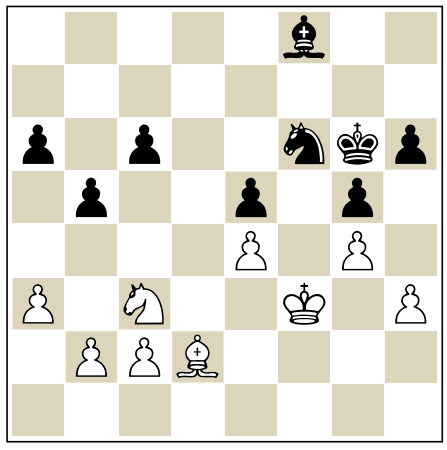
23...g5!?

Allowing Black's king to have some manoeuvring space, but at the cost of placing another pawn on a dark square. A more careful, but 'passive' approach would involve ...♖d7, ...h5 and then ...♔g8-f7-e6, when White would have fewer potential targets.

24.h3 ♔g6 25.g4 Fixing Black's pawns and ensuring White a potential outpost on f5.

25...c6 26.♖f2 b5 Nakamura continues to advance his pawns, as he doesn't want to stay too passive.

27.♖d2 ♖xd2+ 28.♗xd2 ♗f8 29.♔f3



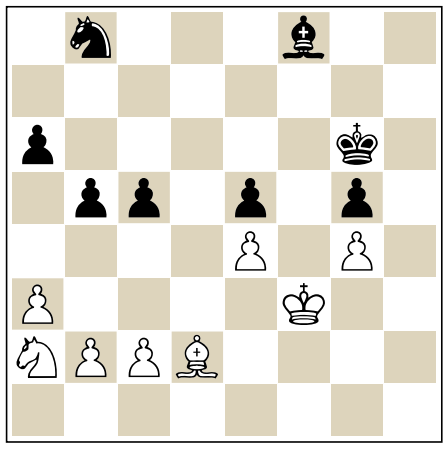
29...h5?! A risky move, as the g5 pawn will henceforth require permanent attention.

30.♘e2 hxg4+ 31.hxg4 ♘d7 32.♘c1 My feeling at the time was that Black should still be able to hold by simply 'sitting on' this position, especially because White's king will have difficulty in ever being able to invade the black camp.

32...c5!? 'Always active' seems to be a philosophy of life for certain players. Here it could be labelled as 'a pawn move too many' due to the weakness on d5, but if followed up correctly it still seems to be playable.

33.♘a2 ♘b8? Aiming to 'activate' with ...♘c6-b4, but clearly overlooking Ivanchuk's rejoinder...

Necessary was 33...c4! when Black would be able to limit any risk resulting from White getting his knight to d5, e.g. 34.♘c3 (nor should Black be unduly worried following 34.♗a5 ♗c5 35.♘c3 ♗d4; or 34.♗e3 ♗c5 35.♗xc5 ♘xc5 36.♘b4 ♔f6) 34...b4 35.axb4 ♗xb4 with the point being that 36.♘b1 ♗xd2 37.♘xd2 can be strongly met by 37...c3!.



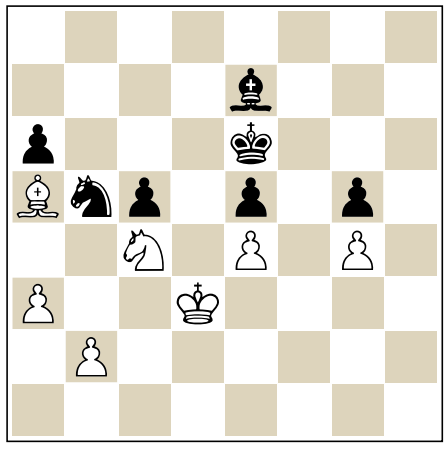
34.c4!

Fixing even further Black's pawns onto the dark squares. It's only now that one can really start coining the term 'bad bishop' with any conviction for the lump on f8.

34...bxc4 35.♘c3 ♘c6 36.♘d5 ♘d4+ 37.♔e3 ♔f7 38.♘b6 ♔e6 39.♘xc4 Ivanchuk plays around the knight on d4.

39...♗e7 40.♗a5 Here I doubt that Black can hold, as White will get his king to c4. However Nakamura now makes things easy...

40...♘b5 41.♔d3



41...♘d6?

Bad, but it may be too late to stem the tide: for example 41...♘d4 42.♘d2 ♔d6 43.♔c4 ♔c6 44.♗c3, and Black's position doesn't inspire confidence.

42.♘xd6

If 42...♔xd6 then 43.♔c4 ♔c6 44.♗d2 ♗f6 45.♗e3 ♗e7 46.a4 a5 47.b3 is already zugzwang.

Black resigned.

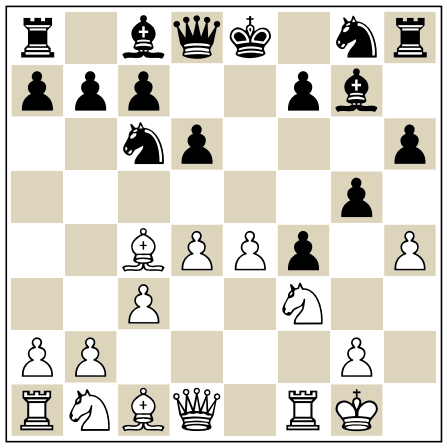
Not to be outdone, Hikaru Nakamura responded in the second game with... the King's Gambit!

GLENN FLEAR

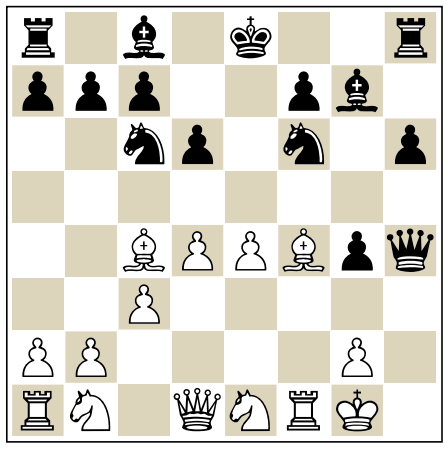
Rapid ace Hikaru Nakamura once again made it to the final, but this time Vasily Ivanchuk was a stumbling block.

KG 1.2 – C38
Hikaru Nakamura
Vasily Ivanchuk
Cap d'Agde 2010 (Final-2)

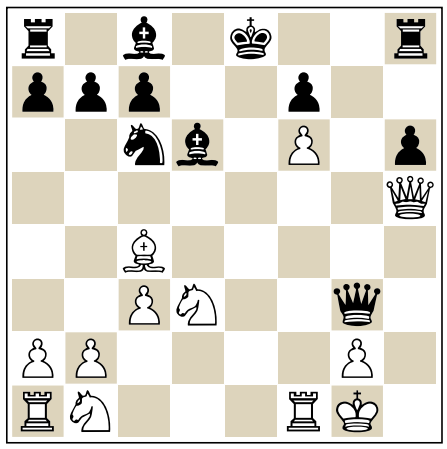
1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♘f3 g5!
Another good antidote to the King's Gambit.
4.♗c4 The main line of the Kieseritzky continues instead with 4.h4 g4 5.♘e5 d6 6.♘xg4 ♘f6, but experience suggests that Black is fine. Nakamura therefore reverts to something even older in the quest to confuse his knowledgeable opponent!
4...♗g7 5.h4
Apparently known as the Philidor or Greco-Philidor Gambit.
5...h6 Black is able to hold onto his structure for the time being, so the American is obliged to seek reward in troubled waters.
6.d4 d6 7.c3 ♘c6 8.0-0
Now Black has several ways forward, but in each case he can't avoid hand-to-hand fighting.



8...g4!? The move preferred by most is the non-committal 8...♕e7. For details please refer to any obscure, forgotten tomes on the King's Gambit. The older the better!
9.♘e1 ♕xh4 Glazkov and Estrin give 9...f3 10.gxf3 ♕xh4 11.f4 g3 12.♘f3 as promising for White. Rybka, on the other hand, considers that Black has a significant advantage. A question of taste?
10.♗xf4 ♘f6
Such positions don't obey normal 'rules of conduct' as White rips open his own kingside in the quest for an attack. Who is better?



11.e5?!
Direct (but premature) action. The more restrained 11.g3 would have been a better way to keep the tension, for example 11...♕h5 12.♘d2 ♗d7 13.♘d3 0-0-0 14.♗e3 ♖hf8 15.♘f4, with double-edged play.
11...dxe5 12.dxe5 g3
With a threat!?
13.♗xg3 ♕xg3 14.exf6 ♗f8
Now White has problems on the dark squares.
15.♘d3 ♗d6 16.♕h5?
Played in an admirable 19th century spirit, but frankly not very good. Nakamura needed a win, but objectively White should have settled for 16.♕e1+ ♔f8 17.♕xg3 ♗xg3 18.♘d2, with a balanced position.

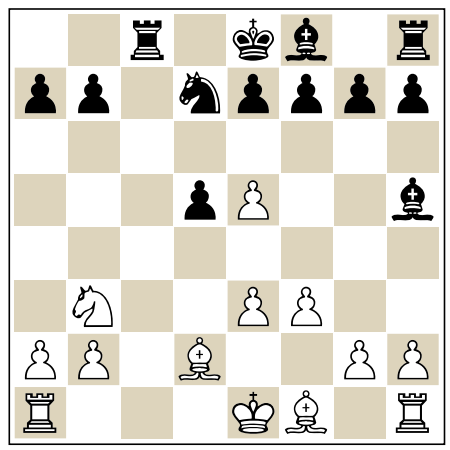


16...♗g4!
The check on f7 is less of an issue than the one on h2!
17.♗xf7+ ♔f8
Rybka prefers 17...♔d8 18.♕d5 ♗e2, with advantage, but Ivanchuk is happy to force a draw.
18.♕g6 ♕h2+ 19.♔f2 ♕g3+
Draw.

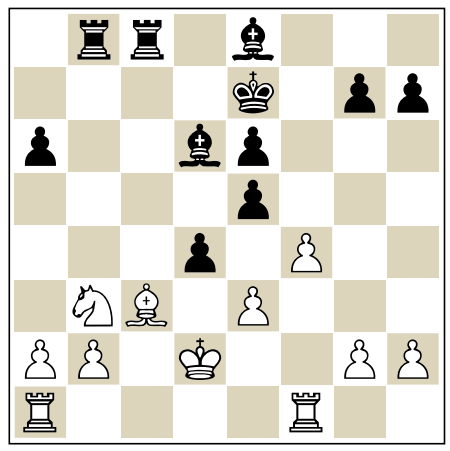
Naturally the quality of rapid games is going to be questionable at times. The remarkable fighting spirit of the participants led to some exciting chess for those watching, but inevitably a few tragedies.

SL 1.6 – D11
Hikaru Nakamura
Le Quang Liem
Cap d'Agde 2010 (Semi-Final-2)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 ♗g4 5.♘bd2 ♘bd7 6.cxd5 cxd5 7.♕b3 ♕b6 8.♘e5 ♕xb3 9.♘xb3 ♘xe5 10.dxe5 ♘d7 11.f3 ♗h5 12.♗d2 ♖c8

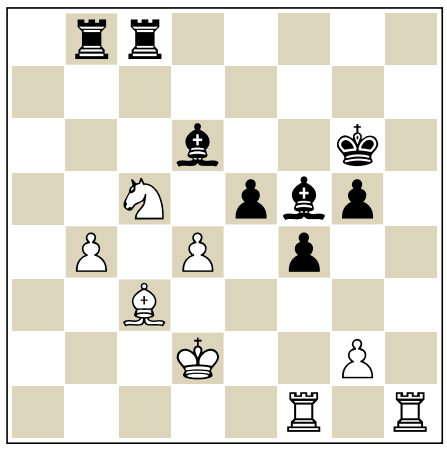


13.e6? Interesting but not correct. But Nakamura had to win to stay in the tie.
13...fxe6 14.♗c3 e5 15.♗b5 e6 16.♘a5 a6?! Surely 16...♖c7! would leave White with no compensation. **17.♗xd7+ ♔xd7 18.♘xb7 ♖b8 19.♘a5 ♗d6 20.♘b3 ♖hc8 21.♔d2 ♔e7 22.♖hf1 ♗e8 23.f4 d4!**

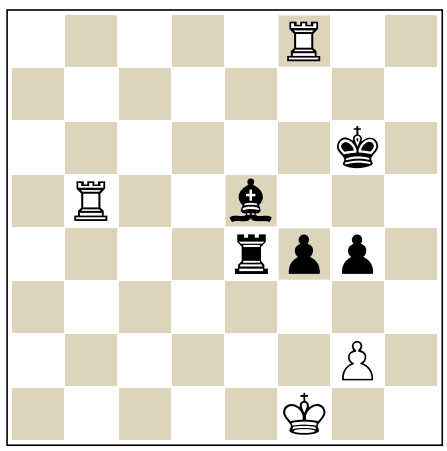


Black is now clearly better due to his bishop pair.
24.exd4 exf4 25.♖f2 g5 26.♘c1

♗c6 27.♘d3 ♗d5 28.a3 ♗e4 29.♖e1 ♗f5 30.h4 h6 31.♖h1 ♔f7 32.♖ff1 ♔g6 33.b4 a5 34.♘c5 axb4 35.axb4 e5 36.hxg5 hxg5

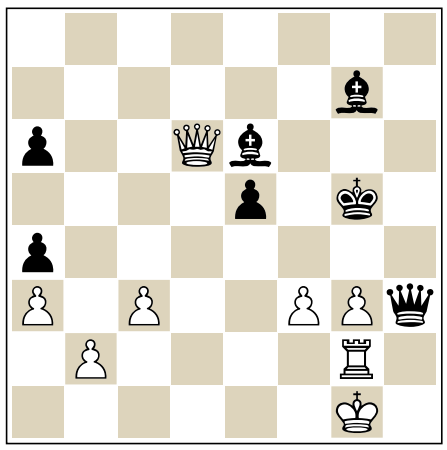


37.♖a1! A remarkable resource that keeps White in the game.
37...exd4 38.♖a6 ♖d8
Or perhaps 38...dxc3+ 39.♔xc3 g4 40.♖xd6+ ♔g5 with an objective edge to Black, but the struggle goes on.
39.♗xd4 ♖xb4 40.♔c3 ♗c8 41.♖c6 ♗b7? A better way to ditch the exchange was 41...♖xd4! 42.♔xd4 ♔f5 43.♔c3 ♔g4.
42.♘xb7 ♖xb7 43.♗b6 ♖xb6 44.♖xb6 ♔f5
It's still drawn, but with time now short Black has to be careful.
45.♖b5+ ♗e5+ 46.♔c2 ♖d4 47.♖h8 ♖c4+ 48.♔d2 ♖d4+ 49.♔e2 ♖e4+ 50.♔f1 ♖e3 51.♖e8 ♖e4 52.♔f2 g4 53.♖f8+ ♔g6 54.♔f1



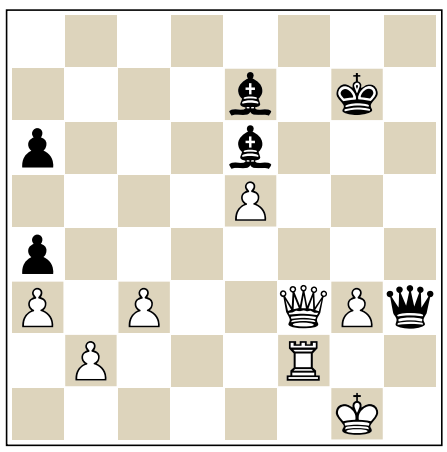
54...♗c3?? A terrible oversight that essentially cost Le Quang Liem his place in the final. After either 54...g3, or 54...♔g5 55.♖g8+ ♔f5, Black 'should' hold.
55.♖g8+ ♔f6 56.♖xg4 ♖a4 57.♖h4 ♔g6 58.♖g4+ ♔f6 59.♖g8 ♗b4 60.♖c8 ♗d6 61.♖c6 ♖d4 62.♔e2 ♔e6 63.♖a6 ♖e4+ 64.♔f2 ♖d4 65.♖b3 ♔d5 66.♔f3 ♔e6 67.♖bb6 ♔e5 68.♖xd6! ♖xd6 69.♖xd6
Black resigned.
Le Quang Liem only had ten minutes to exorcize this shocking turn of events before facing Nakamura at Blitz... with inevitable results!

One notable absentee from the Quarter-Finals was 59-year-old Anatoly Karpov. He clearly lacked match fitness and played too slowly throughout. But he grabbed his chance when it appeared in the following game.

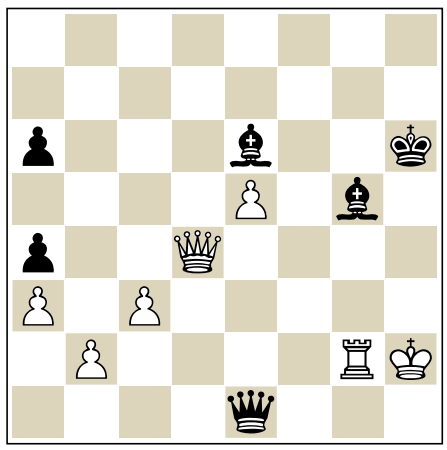


Polgar-Karpov
(qualification)

Judit Polgar had a big advantage on the clock as well as on the board but was unable to put Karpov away and went on to lose.
49.f4+ Correct was 49.♖h2! ♕f5 50.♖h5+! and White wins.
49...♔g6 50.♖f2 ♗f6
Or perhaps 50...exf4 51.♖e2 ♔f7.
51.fxe5 ♗g5 52.♕d3+ ♔g7 53.♕f3 ♗e7



54.♕b7
Simplest now is 54.♖h2 ♗c5+ 55.♔h1 ♕f5 56.♕xf5 ♗xf5 57.♔g2 with a clearly superior endgame.
54...♗d7 55.♕d5 ♗e6 56.♕b7 ♗d7 57.♕a7!? ♗g5 58.♕d4?
58.♖f3 is still better for White.
58...♗e6 59.♖h2? ♕xg3+ 60.♖g2 ♕e1+ 61.♔h2 ♔h6



62.c4??
62.♖g1 would draw.
62...♕f1 63.♔g3 ♕e1+ 64.♔h2 ♗e3!
White resigned.

Having a large chess festival in a holiday camp seems to be a great idea and generates a wonderful ambience as the elite and the masses share the ultimate chess experience for nine days. So many players I know count down the months until the next Cap d'Agde festival and wouldn't miss it for the world. The tournament is now so popular, that other accommodation in the vicinity has to be requisitioned to meet the demand!
In October 2012 Pascal Lazare and his many helpers from the CCAS (Caisse Centrale des Activités Sociales du personnel des industries électriques et gazières), the FFE (Fédération Française des échecs) and Europe Echecs will be hosting the tenth edition. I am expecting something even more spectacular and intend booking early.

Yasser against the giants

Chess Duels is Yasser Seirawan's most ambitious and most personal book. In more than 400 pages of stories and game annotations it gives an overview of what Hans Ree considers to be the golden age of chess.

In 2003, Yasser Seirawan, who is usually called an American grandmaster, though I would call him at least half-Dutch, retired from serious tournament chess. He kept playing on the Internet and in matches for his Dutch club, he played in blitz and rapid tournaments, Fischerandom even, just for fun. But as a chess professional his job, these days, consists of writing and commenting, usually for one of the Internet chess servers.

He may have some other semi-professional activities. In *Chess Duels* he tells us that at one time he was a landlord with several premises, and I remember that already as a youngster I saw him studying the financial pages to follow the vicissitudes of his portfolio.

In the past his books mainly provided instruction for the young, but *Chess Duels*, a mixture of stories and game analyses, is by far his most ambitious book. It provides an account of chess and chess politics at the highest level from about 1980 till the early years of this century.

The subtitle of the book is 'My Games with the World Champions', but not all World Champions against whom Seirawan has played are allowed in.

He enforces a strict entrance policy. The soldier-emperors of FIDE's knock-out tournaments are not even mentioned. And although he played against later World Champions like Kramnik and Anand, these games are not included either. In this book the Giants start with Smyslov and end with Kasparov.

Gentleman from the waist up

In the spirit of the *Praeceptor Germaniae* Siegbert Tarrasch, who on the first page of his *Dreihundert Schachpartien* wrote that he already came into the world as an extraordinary person, Yasser tells us that he was born a robust nine-pound baby out of a small and slender mother. He was well-equipped for future battles, you might say.

This we learn from the introductory chapter of *Chess Duels*, which deals with his childhood, spent in three countries with three successive fathers and stepfathers. An interesting childhood surely, though such upheaval in its personal life might strain a child to breaking-point. If the child can stand it, it could be a valuable experience.

Yasser was born in Damascus in 1960, the son of a Syrian computer expert and an English mother. The two had met when his father was studying in England.

Yasser calls it a genetic gamble, with the fortunate result that he turned out a Bedouin Arab from the waist down and a British gentleman from the waist up. The reverse, being a British gentleman from the waist down, would have been a disaster, he suggests.

But hold it, Yasser! If it was your intention to cast doubt on the virility of the British gentleman, you may be mistaken. It is often said that the character of the British gentleman was formed on the cricket fields of Eton and other public schools, but this leaves out another formative aspect of that education: icy-cold showers and baths.

A cold shower or bath may suppress the sexual urge, but coming out of that bath may have the opposite effect. In the eighteenth century an observer watched the locals of Bath taking the waters in ice-cold communal bathing pools. Coming out of it shivering with cold, they clung at each other, men and women alike, in an unstoppable bout of delirious sexual frenzy.

On the cricket fields the future British gentleman was prepared for war, while the cold showers and baths and their aftermath stimulated his sexual prowess. Of course, this was initially confined to their own sex, but for most of

them, their range would widen eventually. Don't underestimate the British gentleman, Yasser! But I digress, as usual.

A declaration of interest may be necessary at this point. I consider myself a good friend of Yasser Seirawan's, who, like me, lives in Amsterdam. Occasionally, together with a few other chess players, we meet at a local bar, where Yasser entertains us with anecdotes and stories about his close encounters with the greats. It wouldn't be wise for me to be critical and write here that the stories in *Chess Duels* are no good, as that would deprive me of the pleasure of hearing similar stories in the future. Well, I wouldn't anyway. Yasser's stories are quite interesting and often funny.

Always competitive

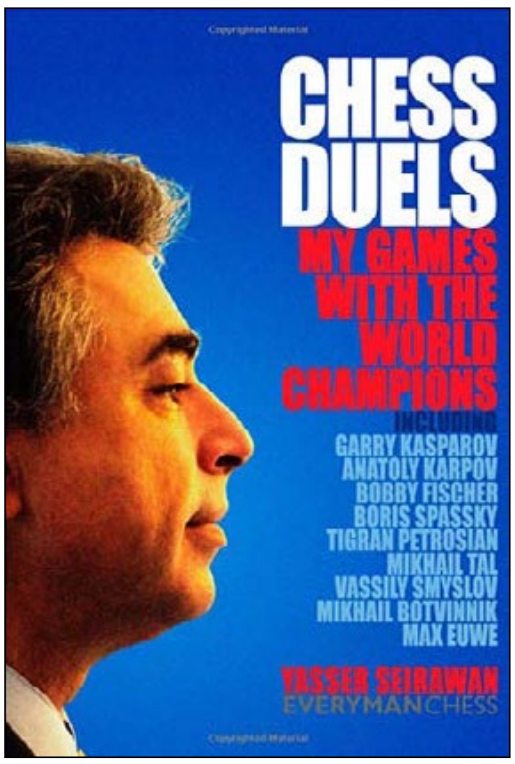
To come back to his childhood: in 1964, when he was almost four years old, the family moved to England, where Yasser met the chess historian Ken Whyld, an old acquaintance of his father's from his student days.

A few years later his father's professional career brought them to Seattle. The parents divorced; his mother and the children moved to Virginia Beach, a place like paradise for Yasser. A stepfather came into his life who was the opposite of his orderly and strict father. Influenced by her new husband his mother became attracted to spirituality, meditation and mysticism, and the home became a meeting place for yoga teachers, astrologists, numerologists, homeopaths, Buddhists, Hindus and born-again Christians. It seems to me that these passing spiritual guests have left little imprint on Yasser's worldview.

After a while, to his great regret, the family moved back to rainy Seattle, where eventually his mother, who appears from his account to be a truly adventurous spirit, would find a third husband, a Hawaiian.

Apparently, with all these changes there was one constant in Yasser's life: the search for excellence. Being the best was not enough, he strove for perfection in every field.

So, as a young child he would come home every day with a pocketful of marbles that he had won



from other boys. When his mother, who didn't like that game, forced him to go to school without any marbles, he would borrow one from a friend and go on winning more.

One time, a boy frustrated with Yasser's continuous winning, threw away his marble as far as possible. Yasser threw his own marble after it. Both marbles went into a groove, Yasser's one clicked against the other and he had won again. As they say, a good player is always lucky, especially when he is young.

Even before chess came into in his life, the competitive spirit always reigned, be it with marbles, schoolwork, surfing, sports or even delivering newspapers.

Another Najdorf story

In my previous article for New in Chess, which was about Najdorf, I expressed some doubt about the literal truth of some of the stories Najdorf told. I think that Yasser shares such doubts, though he was always delighted to listen to the old master's tales. About the following Najdorf story he writes: 'Chess historians have sought to check the veracity of his tale but with no success.'

I have lifted the story from Yasser's short chapter about Alekhine. The long chapters are reserved for the champions with whom he crossed swords himself, with a chapter about Fischer honoris causa.

Najdorf told him that in Poland he played for a club that hosted a simul by Alekhine. Twenty regular opponents and ten that Alekhine took on 'blindfold'. One of these ten was Najdorf, who won his game.

Many years later Najdorf and Alekhine contested a tournament game in Buenos Aires.

To interrupt Najdorf's tale as retold by Seirawan: we might wonder on what occasion this happened, as no regular tournament game between Najdorf and Alekhine is known, neither in Buenos Aires nor anywhere else.

Back to Najdorf. That 'tournament game' (maybe the consultation game they played in Warsaw in 1935 is meant) ended in a draw, and afterwards Najdorf told Alekhine that now he had a plus score against him.

Alekhine answered: 'Miguel, I may be completely drunk, but a draw doesn't give you a plus score against me.' Then Najdorf reminded him of his simul tour in Poland. Alekhine couldn't remember having played against Najdorf, as indeed he had not seen him while playing 'blindfold'. He had been in another room.

But then it dawned on Alekhine, and he asked Najdorf: 'Did you give me the ♖xc3 and ♖xa3 sacrifice?'

Seirawan writes: 'Miguel turned cold. "My God, Jasser. How is this possible? He gave a simultaneous game many years earlier, a random blindfold game and he remembers my sacrifice! You see, Jasser, that is what makes them (World Champions) so great. They have a fantastic memory and they don't forgive or forget a loss!" It is really a marvellous story and I desperately want it to be true because it goes to the heart of chess greatness: all the World Champions I've met do indeed have great memories and they all hate to lose.'

Just like Yasser (always called Jasser with a strong Jewish accent by Najdorf), I would like this story to be true, so I tried to check it, and I found a kernel of truth. In the book *Alekhine in Europe and Asia*, by John Donaldson, Nikolay Minev and Yasser Seirawan, I found an account of Alekhine's tour in Poland in 1928: 'Alekhine played 2 blindfold games in Warsaw on December 1st.' (2 not 10!) 'GM Miguel Najdorf, in his *Reminiscences of Alekhine*, published in *Lasker and His Contemporaries* (Issue 2, pp. 60-62), writes that he was one of the two players that Alekhine played blindfold, and that he (Najdorf) won. The records presented by Tadeusz Wolsza in *Szachista* #11, 1992, pp.332-33, give Alekhine as having won 2-0.' (won, not lost!)

Sleeping with Viktor

And here is a Kortchnoi anecdote, which is quite poignant in itself and also evoked some memories of my own about my experience working as Viktor's second.

In 1980 Yasser played what he calls 'my first really big "super-tournament", the Hoogovens Chess Festival in Wijk aan Zee, Holland.' He beat Kortchnoi in a fine game, and as a result was invited by Viktor to assist him with the preparations for his next Candidates' match against Petrosian.

Yasser came to Viktor's apartment in Switzerland. They worked hard already on the first day, but as Yasser was jet-lagged and it was late anyway, they had to break it off and both went into the guest room.

'I'll sleep here and you'll take the master bedroom', said Viktor. Yasser refused modestly, as he didn't want to chase Viktor out of his own room. A small quarrel ensued. Viktor insisted and finally persuaded Yasser to give in by explaining that he had a bad back and that the bed in the guestroom was really better for him. They said goodnight and Viktor added: 'I hope you are not nervous.' What does he mean by that, Yasser wondered.

Two weeks later he understood. He writes: 'What he was really saying to me was: "Listen, Yasser, if the KGB is going to hit me tonight, they are not going to shoot the guy sleeping in the guest room, they are going to shoot the guy sleeping in the master bedroom!" '

Needless to say, cheerful Yasser took it in good spirit that he had been set up to be murdered, and he still bears no grudges.

I also had a small quarrel with Viktor about sleeping arrangements –in a hotel in a Swiss ski resort where we prepared for another Candidates' match in 1977, also against Petrosian.

We had separate rooms, but when Viktor's future wife Petra Leeuwerik came over for a few days, he insisted that she get his room, while he would share mine. So Petra would sleep in Viktor's room, while Viktor and I slept together in one big bed.

Really, Viktor? But he insisted. A more pleasant arrangement for the three of us can easily be imagined. At the time I thought that Viktor might not want to accelerate a budding love relation with Petra by sharing a room with her, but after reading Yasser's story another interpretation suggests itself.

Viktor and Petra were a team at war with the Soviet Union. If Viktor really thought that the KGB was out to get them – and he undoubtedly did – it would be wise not to share a room with Petra, just as highly-placed executives of a big corporation do not take the same plane.

High drama with Garry

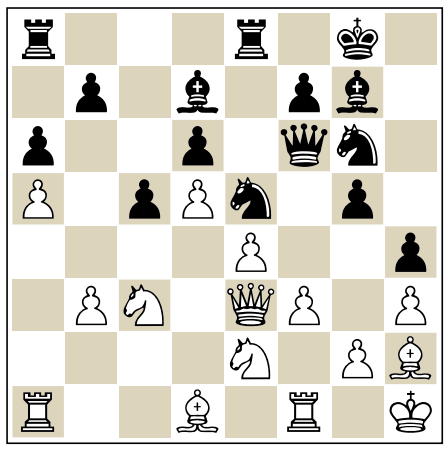
There are many more stories in the book that I would like to retell, but I'll stop for the moment, so as not to give you the impression that this book is only a storybook. It is also a collection of Yasser's games against the Giants.

A game that he annotates in fearsome detail is that against Kasparov (who he likes to call 'my little brother') from Skelleftea 1989. After 20 pages of analysis he writes: 'As a postscript to this game, I would suggest two things, dear reader. Firstly, just look again at the game moves only with their punctuation. Clearly it was a game of high drama, slips, near falls, thunderous blows and excellent recoveries. Then I would suggest looking at the game with an engine. I found it astonishing that the valuations hardly ever change. It is as if the game was in the drawing zone as from the opening move.'

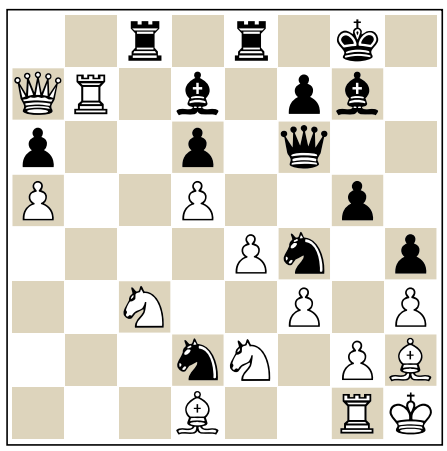
An engine cannot be supplied by this paper magazine, but his punctuation I have copied below.

Yasser Seirawan
Garry Kasparov
Skelleftea World Cup 1989

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗e2 0-0 6.♗g5 c5 7.d5 h6 8.♗e3 e6 9.♕d2 exd5 10.cxd5 ♖e8! 11.f3 h5! 12.a4 a6 13.a5? ♘h7! 14.♗d1 ♘d7 15.♘ge2 ♘e5 16.b3 ♕h4+?! 17.♗f2 ♕f6 18.♕e3? h4! 19.h3 g5! 20.0-0 ♗d7 21.♔h1! ♘f8! 22.♗g1! ♘fg6 23.♗h2



23...c4?? 24.♖b1 ♖ac8 25.♕a7! ♘f4 26.bxc4? ♘xc4! 27.♖xb7? ♘d2 28.♖g1



28...♘xh3!! 29.e5? ♖xe5? 30.♖xd7 ♘xg1 31.♕xg1! ♖ee8? 32.♖xd6 ♕f5 33.♗a4! ♕d3! 34.♗xe8 ♖xe8 35.♖c6 h3 36.♗g3? hxg2+! 37.♕xg2 ♘xf3 38.d6 ♖e6! 39.♕f2 g4 40.♖c8+? ♔h7 41.♘f4? ♖h6+ 42.♔g2 ♘e1+ 43.♔g1 ♘f3+ Draw.

Agonies of women's chess

One more anecdote, chosen because it gives me the opportunity to add a story that I have heard myself. The anecdote was told to Yasser by Boris Spassky. Spassky's stories were often a theatrical performance of high quality, well rendered by Yasser in the book, but here I'll give only the essence.

At a Soviet Championship, with a Women's Soviet Championship played alongside it, Spassky and his second Isaac Boleslavsky were sitting in the cafeteria. One of the women players came along in a state of rage and desperation; she had lost her game and implored Boleslavsky to help her for the next round.

Who are you playing against? She mentioned a name. Boleslavsky said: 'She will play 1.e4. You will play 1...e5. She will play 2.♘f3...' And so he went on with 2...♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘d4 4.♘xe5 ♕g5 5.♘xf7 ♕xg2, when White can resign.

The next day the lady came to the restaurant in excellent spirits. Everything had happened as predicted by Boleslavsky. 'I have won brilliantly', she said, and then she looked at Spassky with disgust and added: 'Ha! with such a second I could be World Champion too!'

A fine story, though I think that chess historians browsing through bulletins of Soviet Women championships will have a hard time ascertaining the accuracy of it. Anyway, the tale reminded me of a story that I was told by the Dutch chess journalist and organizer Berry Withuis.

At one time he acted as a second for a Dutch woman player, probably in a zonal tournament. It will become clear that this was at a time when the level of women's chess was incomparably lower than it is today.

Although the women were fierce rivals, their seconds, all of them men, formed a fraternity, exchanging gloomy stories about the agonies of their job. A heartbreaking story came from a second who told Berry Withuis that his protégée had hit him in a rage. What had he done wrong?

He had taught her a good and solid defence in the Sicilian: the Scheveningen Variation. Not going into too much detail, he had indicated the general set-up: pawns on e6, d6 and a6, knights on c6 en f6, bishops on d7 and e7, then castle and finally the queen to c7.

His instructions had been dutifully followed for awhile, but then, when the lady wanted to top it all off by playing ...♕c7, she found to her distress that this was impossible because her pawn was still on c7. She lost that game and furiously reproached her second for recommending an opening system that was based on an illegal move. I have an inkling that this story throws more light on the history of misogyny than on that of women's chess.

Who is the greatest?

Without explicitly providing a list, Seirawan indicates of several champions how he would rate them in the hierarchy of the best players of all time. Here is how they compare: 1. Kasparov, 2. Karpov, 3. Fischer, 4. Anand, 5. Spassky.

One can argue endlessly about such lists, of course, but I won't. As Anand is still competing at top level, Seirawan realizes that he might improve his position. He writes that if Anand were to win his 2010 match against Topalov (which, meanwhile, he has done) he would earn his recognition as being the third greatest player of all time. (Overtaking Fischer!) And 'should he keep such winning feats for five years, he may well earn the best player ever monicker.'

Well, that would be quite a feat, overtaking no less a threesome than Fischer, Karpov and Kasparov in the twilight of one's career. Life begins at forty!

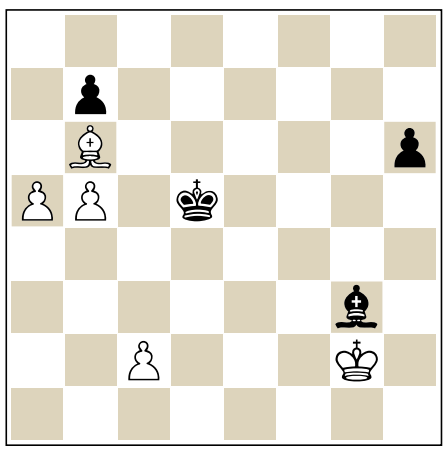
And finally, how did Seirawan score against the greats? Against Mikhail Tal he scored an amazing +4 =1 –0 in classical games. Such good fortune cannot last, but all in all his results do him credit. Against the World Champions from Smyslov to Kasparov, with the exception of Fischer, whom he never played, he scored +9 =19 –12 in classical games, i.e. 18½-22½.

Well done, Yasser!

JAN TIMMAN

Missed chances in the endgame

The Russian Defence came under heavy fire at the Tal Memorial in Moscow. Kramnik bit the dust against Karjakin after narrowly escaping against Nakamura. Gelfand had already had a rough time of it against Karjakin in the first round. It had looked as if he was going to save the day in a bishop ending, but then things went wrong again.



Karjakin-Gelfand
Moscow Tal Memorial 2010 (1)
position after 47.♔g2

Which square should Black choose for the bishop?

47...♗b8? The losing move. After 47...♗d6, 47...♗e5, or even 47...♗f4, White would have had no win, e.g. 47...♗d6 48.a6 bxa6 49.bxa6 ♔c6 50.♗e3 h5 51.♔h3 ♗e7!, and White fails to win the black h-pawn. Nor is 48.♔h3 (instead of 48.a6) sufficient, because then Black will play 48...♗b8 after all. After 49.a6 bxa6 50.bxa6 ♔c4 the white king is too far away.

48.a6

A winning move, given the situation. Because of the unfortunate position of the black bishop, Black cannot use his king to stop the a-pawn.

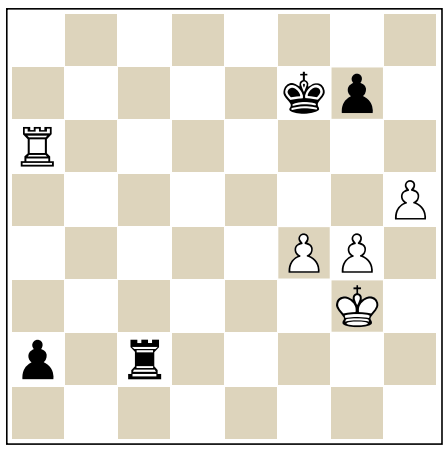
48...bxa6 49.bxa6 ♔c4 50.♔f3!

Now the main threat is 51.♔e2, covering the c-pawn from d1.

50...♔c3 51.♔e4 And now the road to b7 is clear and White won.

Later in the tournament an even worse fate befell Gelfand: playing against Wang Hao, he resigned in a drawn rook ending. I know from experience what a terrible feeling this is: in 1996 the same thing happened to me against Shirov in Wijk aan Zee.

Psychologically speaking, Gelfand's resignation was understandable: he had been losing earlier in the endgame, although it was not so easy to demonstrate this.



Wang Hao-Gelfand
Moscow Tal Memorial 2010 (7)
position after 54...♔f7

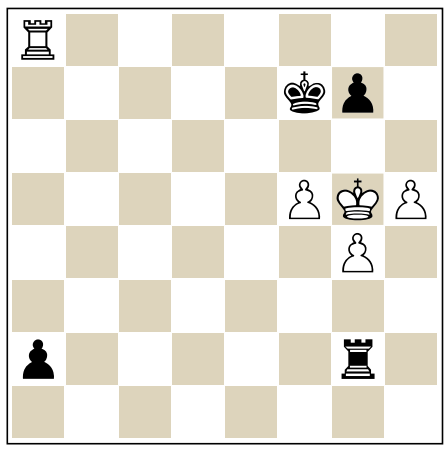
An easy win at the first sight, but the black g-pawn lends the black position some strength. White's winning plan, therefore, is to swap one of his kingside pawns for the black g-pawn. Ideally he would like to swap the h-pawn, which would result in a theoretical win already pointed out by Kopaev in 1956. But swapping the f-pawn is usually also enough for the win.

55.g5?

A fundamental mistake. By advancing his pawns, White is taking away squares from his king.

Correct was 55.♔h4 in order to transfer the king to g5. After the game Wang Hao showed the variation: 55...♖b2 56.♔g5 ♖g2 57.♔f5 ♖b2 58.♖a7+ ♔g8 59.g5 ♖c2, with a draw. But with 59.♔g6 ♖b6+ 60.♔g5 ♖b2 61.h6 White can steer for the desired pawn swap. In his turn, Black can prevent it by playing a different 57th move, which is why this variation is not representative.

White will win as follows: 57.♖a7+ (instead of 57.♔f5) 57...♔g8 58.♖a8+ ♔f7 59.f5!, and a situation of mutual zugzwang has arisen.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

White to play would not get any further. Now Black is forced to

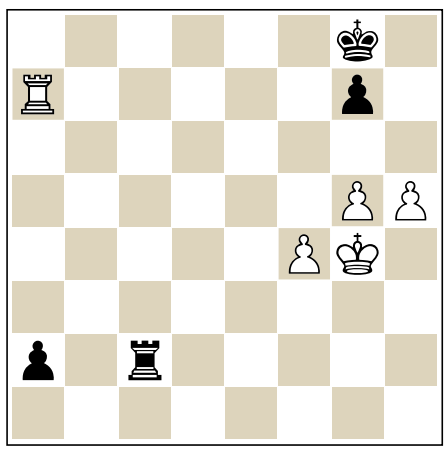
take his king or his rook away from their best squares. After 59...♔e7 60.♖a7+ Black has two possibilities:

A) 60...♔f8 61.f6! gxf6+ 62.♔xf6, and the mating threat means that White has succeeded;

B) 60...♔e8 61.h6! gxh6+ 62.♔f6! ♖xg4 63.♖xa2, with a theoretically winning endgame. The black king is on the wrong side. Nor will 62...♖b2 63.♔g6 ♖g2 64.♖a8+ ♔d7 65.♔f7 save Black: after 65...♔d6 66.f6 ♔d5 67.g5! hxg5 68.♔g7 ♔c4 69.f7 ♖f2 70.♖xa2 White will win.

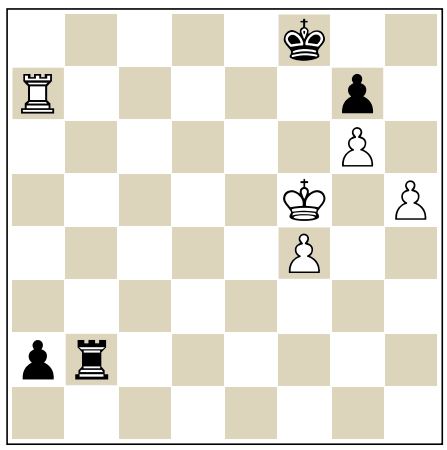
Black will be unable to prevent this mutual zugzwang from arising, because White can always gain or lose a move with his rook.

55...♖b2 56.♔g4 ♖c2 57.♖a7+ ♔g8



White's problem is becoming clear: his king will be unable to penetrate.

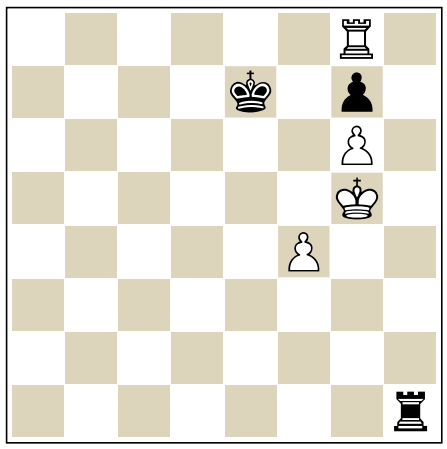
58.♔f5 ♖b2 59.♔g4 ♖g2+ 60.♔h3 ♖b2 61.g6 ♔f8 62.♔g4 ♖c2 63.♔g5 ♖g2+ 64.♔f5 ♖b2 65.♖a8+ ♔e7 66.♖a6 ♖b5+ 67.♔g4 ♖b2 68.♖a7+ ♔f8 69.♔f5



69...♖h2

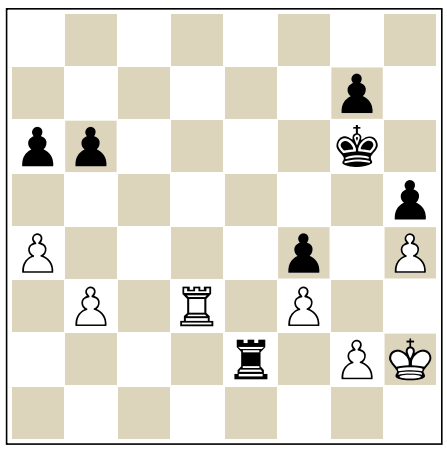
Simpler is 69...♖c2, since after 70.♖a8+ ♔e7 71.h6 gxh6 72.g7 Black has the finesse 72...a1♕ 73.♖xa1 ♔f7, with a draw.

70.h6 ♖xh6 71.♖xa2 ♖h1 72.♖a8+ ♔e7 73.♖g8 ♖h5+ 74.♔g4 ♖h1 75.♔g5



To Wang Hao's surprise, Gelfand resigned here. After 75...♔e6 there can be no win, since White will be unable to capture the g-pawn. After 76.f5+ ♔e5 77.♖e8+ ♔d6 78.♖e6+ ♔d7 it is true that the black king has been cut off, but White will be unable to exploit this, because his own king has no way through.

Earlier in the tournament, Gelfand had had an instructive rook ending that did end well for him.



Gelfand-Shirov
Moscow Tal Memorial 2010 (2)
position after 42...♖xe2

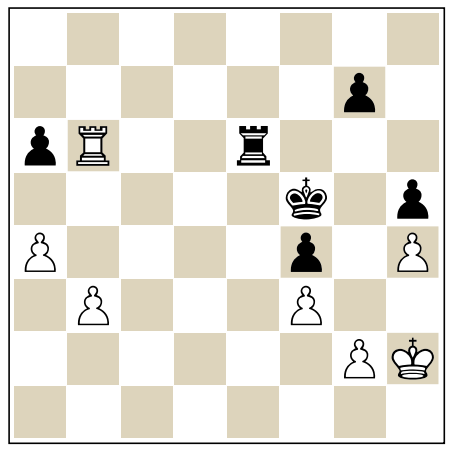
Gelfand had liquidated to this rook ending, as he is going to win a pawn on the queenside.

43.♖d6+ ♔f5 44.♖xb6

This looks like an easy win, but Black has an unexpected resource.

44...♖e6

Right idea, wrong execution. Black should have gone 44...a5!, with the intention of meeting 45.♖b5+ with 45...♖e5. He can afford to go for the pawn ending, since the white king is offside. I do not see how White could possibly reinforce his position.



45.a5! In this way White creates a situation in which the pawn ending is winning after all. Dvoretsky showed that an immediate swap would result in a draw. His main line then continues as follows: 45.♖xe6 ♔xe6 46.g3 fxg3+ 47.♔xg3 a5 48.♔f4 ♔f6 49.b4 axb4 50.♔e3 g5 51.hxg5+ ♔g6! 52.a5 b3, and Black draws by advancing his two passed pawns. It is important for Black not to capture the white g-pawn on move 51, because this would give White the check 53.f4, and after promoting his a-pawn he will control square h1, preventing Black's h-pawn from queening.

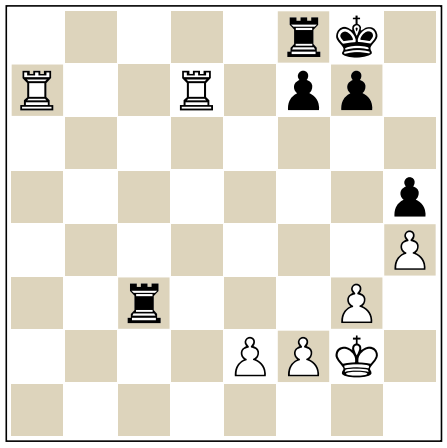
45...♖e3 Perforce, Black continues to look for salvation in the rook ending, which turns out to be losing by a hair.

46.b4 ♖b3 47.♖xa6 ♖xb4 48.♖b6 ♖a4 49.♖b5+ ♔g6 50.♖g5+ ♔h6 51.♔g1

An important finesse. If Black had been able to take his rook to a1, it would have been a draw. Now Black can put his rook on the second rank, but then the white king simply goes to b1. It is very im-

portant for the white rook to have a foothold from where it covers both a-pawn and g-pawn. White won after 61 moves.

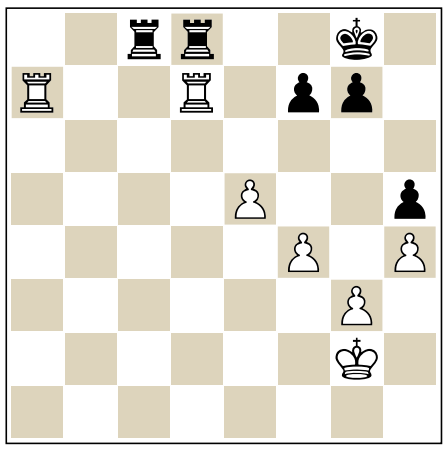
Aronian quickly took the lead in the tournament, but subsequently failed to win a single game. In a few games he came close to victory.



Aronian-Karjakin
Moscow Tal Memorial 2010 (5)
position after 37...♖f8

White has achieved a lot: an extra pawn and two rooks on the seventh rank. But it still turns out to be insufficient for the win.

38.e4 Logical. White wants to push the pawn to e6. **38...♖cc8 39.e5 ♖fe8** Accurate defending. After 39...♖cd8 40.e6 ♖xd7 41.exd7 ♖d8 42.♔f3 the white king penetrates via f4 and g5. **40.f4 ♖ed8** Now he can. The white f-pawn blocks the white king's access.



41.e6

On *ChessBase*, 41.f5 is indicated as a better winning attempt, but with 41...♖xd7 42.♖xd7 ♖e8 43.♖d5 f6! Black will avert all danger. After 44.e6 g6 the white king is too far away, while 45.fxg6 ♔g7 won't yield White anything.

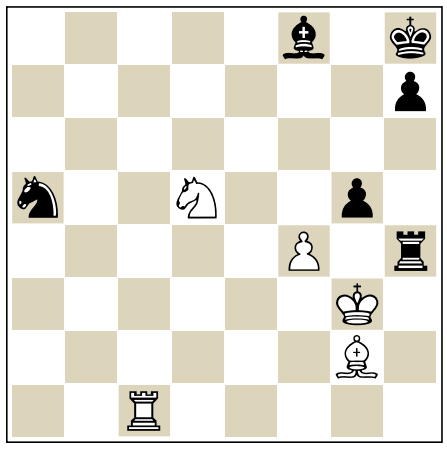
With 41.♖e7 ♖e8 42.f5 White can try to improve on this variation, but then Black goes 42...♖xe7 43.♖xe7 ♖a8 44.♔f3 ♖a3+, and will continue to check the white king, which has no good way to hide from the checks.

41...♖xd7 42.exd7 ♖d8 43.g4

After 43.♔f3, 43...f5 would have been sufficient for a draw. The white king is kept away.

43...hxg4 44.f5 f6 Another accurate move. Black prevents the further advance of the f-pawn. The game was drawn after 56 moves.

This was not a real missed chance for Aronian, but the following endgame certainly was.



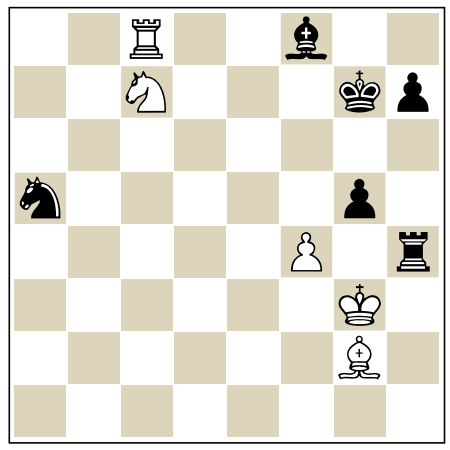
Aronian-Nakamura
Moscow Tal Memorial 2010 (7)
position after 44...g5

Despite being a pawn down, White has excellent winning chances. The black knight is cut off from the action and for the moment, the rook is offside as well. The presence of opposite-coloured bishops gives White very good winning chances.

45.♖c8 The start of the attack.

45...♔g7 46.♖a8?

But this is an unaccountable error. White allows the knight to return to the fray. This must have been a miscalculation on Aronian's part. A very strong move was 46.♘c7, after which Black can defend in the following ways:

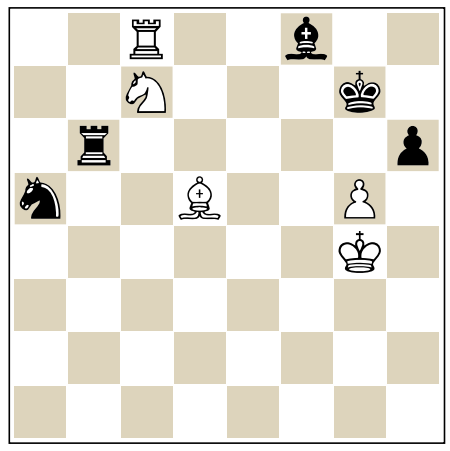


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 46...♖xf4 47.♘e6+ ♔g8 48.♘xf4 gxf4+ 49.♔xf4, and without the (useless) black h-pawn this endgame, according to the tablebases, is winning for White;

B) 46...h6. This move is suggested on *ChessVibes*. After 47.♘e6+ ♔f6 48.♘xf8 an endgame arises that has not yet been added to the tablebases. The bad position of the black knight in particular gives White excellent practical winning chances;

C) 46...♖h6 47.fxg5, and the rook has no good squares, e.g. 47...♖g6 48.♗e4! ♖xg5+ 49.♔f4, or 47...♖b6 48.♔g4 h6 49.♗d5



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and in both cases Black will be unable to prevent losing a piece;

D) 46...♗e7. The main defence. After 47.♘e6+ the play diverges again:

D1) 47...♔f7 48.♗d5 gxf4+ 49.♘xf4+ ♔g7 50.♖a8, and the a5- knight will be lost. According to the new tablebases, the ensuing endgame is winning for White;

D2) 47...♔h6 48.fxg5+ ♗xg5 49.♘xg5, and Black will be unable

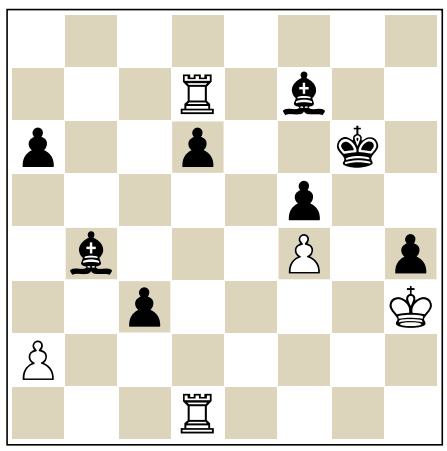
NEW IN CHESS

'If Aronian had won this game, he would have finished clear first.'

to capture the knight, again giving White an extra piece.

46...♘c6 Now there's no life at all left in the position and the game was drawn after 60 moves.

With hindsight you could say that if Aronian had won this game, he would have finished clear first, although Mamedyarov had more reason to complain in this regard. But earlier in the tournament, Karjakin also had a chance, as witness the following fragment.

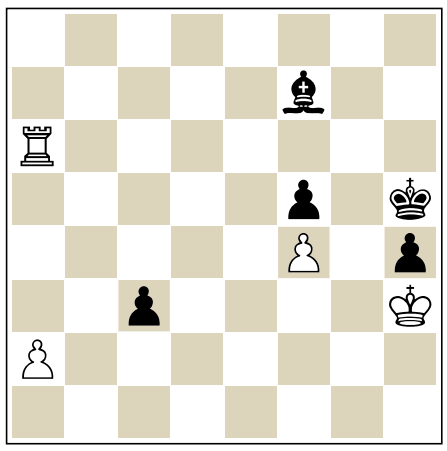


Karjakin-Shirov
Moscow Tal Memorial 2010 (4)
position after 38...♗b4

White will obviously have to return the exchange in order to keep his winning chances alive. The only question is when?

39.♔xh4

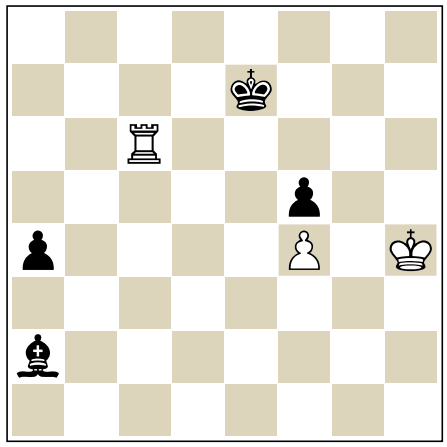
Understandable, especially just before the time-control. White does not want to allow the enemy king to reach h5. A closer look shows that the king is not terribly well positioned on this square. Correct was 39.♖1xd6+, and after 39...♗xd6 40.♖xd6+ ♔h5 41.♖xa6 the position is just about winning for White. In most cases Black will be unable to prevent his c-pawn being swapped for the white a-pawn. Later, the black h-pawn will be lost as well.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

The crucial variation goes as follows: 41...♗d5 42.♖a7! ♗e4 43.♖h7+ ♔g6 44.♖c7 c2 45.♔xh4 ♔f6 46.♔g3 ♔e6 47.♔f2 ♔d6 48.♖c3 ♔d5 49.♔e3, and the black king is kept away, after which the white a-pawn decides. But it was difficult to calculate this variation in the limited time available.

39...♗xa2 40.♖1xd6+ ♗xd6 41.♖xd6+ ♔f7 42.♖c6 a5 43.♖xc3 a4 And Black just manages to hang on. **44.♖c6 ♔e7**

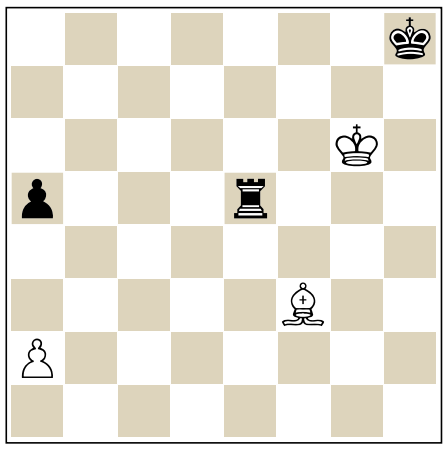


45.♔g3

This is not a serious winning attempt and the game ended in a draw after 63 moves, but after 45.♖a6 ♗b3 46.♔g5 ♗c2 47.♖c6 the position remains drawn. The bishop has squares on b1 and d3, while 47...♗b3 48.♔xf5 a3 also stays just within the drawing margins.

Endgames of rook against bishop turn out to be hard to fathom even at top level. In the previous issue, the endgame of ♗ + ♙a3 vs ♖ + ♙a2 was discussed in connection with the game Aronian-Kramnik. To be honest, I was pretty surprised about what Doggers stated in his report: that both players had assessed the endgame as drawn. Chéron had already concluded as early as 1948 that the endgame is won in all cases. Only if White were to succeed in winning the enemy a-pawn without endangering his king would it be a draw.

In the following position, White has to pull out all the stops to get the draw.



Timman 2010
White to play and draw

If White manages to push his a-pawn to a4 in order to cover it with the bishop from c6, the draw is in the bag. But after 1.a4, both 1...♖c5 and 1...♖e3 will win, which means that White must first improve the position of his king.

1.♔f6 ♖e3 2.♗c6!

Preventing the advance of the enemy a-pawn.

2...♖a3 3.♗d5

Now White will have to allow the advance, but since the black rook will have to vacate a3 again, White has gained a crucial tempo.

3...a4 4.♔e5 ♖h3

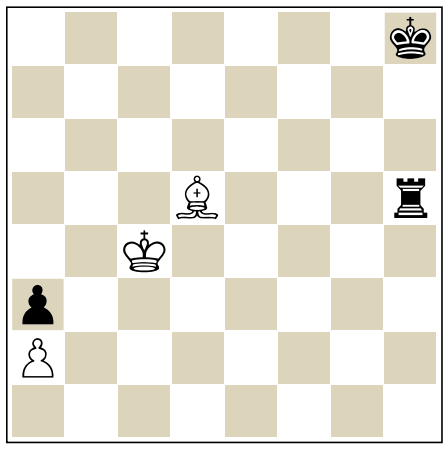
The alternative was 4...♖g3. I will return to this later.

5.♔d4 a3 6.♔c4

Threatening 7.♔b4 followed by 8.♗b3. Black has only one move to prevent this.

6...♖h5

Now White will have to choose a square for his bishop.



7.♗a8!!

Improbable as it seems, this is the only move. After, for example, 7.♗f3 Black would win with 7...♖h2.

If Black had played 4...♖g3 and 6...♖g5, White would have been forced to find another square for his bishop, since 7.♗a8 would then run into 7...♖g8! and 8...♖b8, and the white king has been cut off. Then the only move would have been 7.♗f3, intending to meet 7...♖g3 with 8.♗d1!, after which Black will be unable to stop White executing his plan with the king on b4 and the bishop on b3. Note that this is always possible because of the remote position of the black king.

7...♖h6 8.♔b4 ♖b6+ 9.♔a5!

Again the only move. Incredibly enough, the white king has had to trek from g6 to a5 in order to secure the draw.

9...♖g6 10.♔b4

And a draw. Black will be unable to make any progress.

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JUST CHECKING

NAME: **Maurice Ashley**

ELO-RATING: **2465**

DATE OF BIRTH: **6 March, 1966**

PLACE OF BIRTH: **Kingston, Jamaica**

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: **Brooklyn, New York**

NEW IN CHESS

What is your favourite colour?
None, but I always feel good in purple.

What kind of food makes you happy?
Jamaican food: ackee and saltfish, roast breadfruit, sweet plantains. Especially when my mother cooks it.

And what drink?
Sorrel, but only if it's with Jamaican food.

Who is your favourite author?
I used to love reading Ray Bradbury in my youth. Now I like anything Michael Lewis writes.

What was the best or most interesting book you ever read?
I love reading too much to have just one answer. *Guns, Germs and Steel* by Jared Diamond is one of the deepest I've ever read

What is your all-time favourite movie?
Groundhog Day would be at the top. Then *Amadeus*, *The Color Purple*, *The Matrix*, *The Bourne* series and *Back to the Future* are some I have watched a million times.

What music do you like to listen to?
Everything. R&B, Reggae, and Hip-Hop always get my head bopping, and lately I've been tuning into a lot of salsa and merengue.

Who are the three greatest chess players of all time?
Kasparov, Fischer, and Alekhine. But I can see an argument for at least six others.

What was the best game you ever played?
The combination against Shabalov at the St. Martin in 1993 still makes me smile. It's funny, but I recently looked at my games and found that my favourite games mostly came before I got my GM title. Back then, I didn't have too much sense, and it made for some fiery chess. Of course, I also got burned pretty badly.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time and why?
Like many, I have to say Tal. His combination of imagination, fearlessness, creativity and passion for chess has never been surpassed. But I have to admit that Petrosian probably taught me more about chess.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
Bad memories! But only for everyday things. And being a little too serious about life.

Do you have any superstitions concerning chess?
I hate playing on my birthday. I remember when I got my final GM norm, I actually lost my second round game to IM Greg Shahade. Not a good present.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
An astronaut. If I live long enough and have the cash, I will definitely be on one of those tourist trips to space.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
Barack Obama, Abraham Lincoln, and my late maternal grandmother.

Is there something you'd love to learn?
That's all I ever do is learn. Ten languages, how to fly an airplane, how to dance salsa and how to stop procrastinating would be nice. Oh, and how to cook.

If you could change one thing in the chess world, what would it be?
Premature draws.

What is the stupidest rule in chess?
That agreed on draws exist.

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
Of course, particularly when it comes to picking up women.

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
'A bad day at chess is better than any good day at work.' – Anonymous

JEREMY SILMAN's MASTERPIECE

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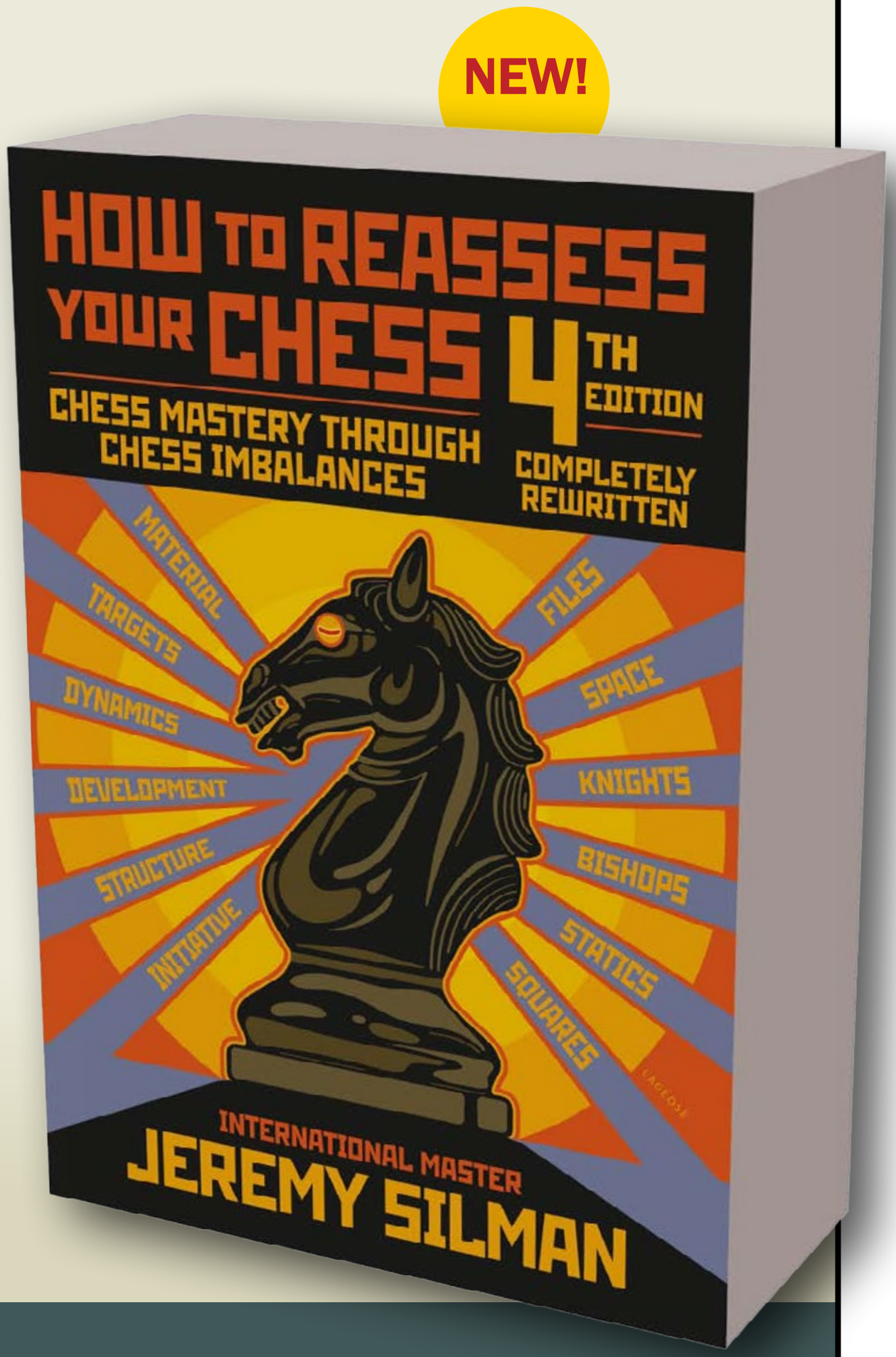

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